# HISTORY OF THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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BOOK TRADERS

# HISTORY OF THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN INDIA

## VOLUME III

BY

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DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE
WHO LIVED AND DIED
FOR
THE FREEDOM OF INDIA

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# REFACE

This, the concluding volume of the *History of the Freedom Movement in India,* begins with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as the leader of the movement in 1919 and traces its history up to the achievement of freedom on 15 August, 1947. During the first fifteen years of this period Gandhi was the most dominant figure in Indian politics and was the sole guide of the whole movement. Even after that period he was a force to reckon with and, though not always directly at the helm of affairs, was not unoften the power behind the throne. It is inevitable, therefore, that a review of Gandhi's career would form the principal subject in this volume. In performing this task the historian is confronted with a difficulty which is almost unique in character.

This is due to the fact that Gandhi combined in himself the dual role of a saint and an active politician. He has been called by some 'the most saintly among politicians', and by others, 'the most political saint.' This shows the paradoxical nature of his personality. Whether such combination is good or bad need not be discussed here, but it poses a serious problem to the historian. One's attitude towards a saint or view of his personal conduct and career is a matter of devotion and. personal opinion. But one's judgment on the public career of a political leader rests upon certain assumptions and expectations of a norm of conduct to be followed by him. The former is based upon faith, pure and simple, while the latter requires logical reasoning untrammelled by any personal sentiment or belief. The historian has nothing to do with the first, and is concerned only with the

second aspect. Unfortunately, Gandhi's followers did not make this distinction and gave unto the political leader what was really due to the saint. This confusion, pervading all ranks of Congressmen from the highest to the lowest, has so much distorted public view of Indian politics since 1920 that it has now become wellnigh impossible to make a rational historical survey of the course of political events, without first clearly exposing the curious mentality which made Gandhi a sort of indissoluble composite of spiritual and political leadership.

This is best illustrated by the implicit faith in, and unquestioning obedience to, Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Party, shown by even very highly eminent persons. They mostly belonged to two categories. The first comprised those who willingly surrendered their conscience and judgment to the safe keeping of the political *Guru*. These have been described by Abul Kalam Azad with reference to some members of the Working Committee of the Congress in the following words: They "would not oppose Gandhiji even when they were not fully convinced,...were generally content to follow Gandhiji's lead....They rarely tried to judge things on their own, and in any case they were accustomed to subordinate their judgment to Gandhiji. As such discussion with them was almost useless. After all our discussions, the only thing they could say was that we must have faith in Gandhiji. They held that if we trusted him he would find some way out." Azad has included in this category, specifically by name, three eminent leaders of the Congress, including Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and has added that his view was based on "long experience."*

The second category consisted of those who fell a victim to the magic charm of Gandhi even though they fumed

* Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 75.

and fretted at his obsolete views and inexplicable or irrational dogmas repulsive to their own independent judgment. Such strange influence of Gandhi over his followers has been very frankly and lucidly explained by the most distinguished among them, namely, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Some of these utterances of Nehru have been quoted in this volume (pp. 65, 475, 487, 557).

Strangely enough, Gandhi himself was fully aware of this mentality of his followers and publicly condemned it in the statement he issued on 17 September, 1934, a part of which has been quoted in pp. 537-8 of this volume.

This kind of absolute devotion and self-surrender has been highly extolled by certain religious sects and nobody need quarrel with them. But when it forms the basis of political action and is cited as justification for doing things not approved on rational principles, it becomes difficult for a historian to appreciate the laudable sentiments of the disciples. The inevitable effect of such sentiments was that the great political leaders of the Congress came to look upon Gandhi as a superman, who was infallible and acted by instinct, not logic or reason, and therefore should not be judged by the ordinary standards which we apply to other political leaders. This has been very frankly stated by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, one of the most devoted followers of Gandhi ( p 66 ), as well as Jawaharlal Nehru, who wrote that "Gandhi was a unique personality and it was impossible to judge him by the usual standards, or even to apply the ordinary canons of logic to him" (p. 487). No wonder that lesser men looked upon Gandhi almost as a divine being, the truth of whose words and views must not be questioned on any account.

As I have explained ( p. 487 ), a true historian cannot uphold such a doctrine or proceed on this basis when judging of Gandhi as a political leader. A mystic or saint—such as Gandhi undoubtedly was—is beyond the

purview of political history, but in dealing with Gandhi as the great leader of the Indian National Congress, a purely political organization fighting for freedom from British yoke, history must apply to him the same standards of judgment and criticism as have been applied to all other personalities, great or small, who have played any role in political affairs. Sober history must subject the public life of Gandhi to a critical and rational review without passion or prejudice, uninfluenced in the least by personal feelings of admiration or devotion, and, above all, by a disposition or proneness to believe as right and proper whatever he might have chosen to do or say. Such history must begin by discounting the halo of semi-divinity—and therefore also of infallibility—which was cast round Gandhi during his life and continues to a large extent even now, thanks to the propaganda to exploit his name for political purposes.

I yield to none in my profound respect for Gandhi, the saint and the humanitarian. But as the author of this volume, I am only concerned with the part he played in the struggle for India's freedom from the British yoke. I have necessarily to view his life and activities, thoughts, and feelings primarily from a narrow angle, namely as a politician and statesman leading a great political organization which was not intended to be a humanitarian association or World Peace Society, but had been formed for a definite political object, namely, to achieve India's freedom from political bondage. It has been my painful duty to show that, looked at strictly from this point of view, the popular image of Gandhi cannot be reconciled with what he actually was. A historian must uphold the great ideal of truth which was so dear to Gandhi himself, and if we delineate the political life of Gandhi with strict adherence to truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, it will, I believe, be patent to all that Gandhi was lacking in both political wisdom and political strategy—as we commonly understand

these terms—and far from being infallible, committed serious blunders, one after another, in pursuit of some Utopian ideals and methods which had no basis in reality. It will also be seen that the current estimate of the degree or extent of his success bears no relation to actual facts.

I am not unaware of the rude shock that such treatment would give to a large section of Indians and the great probability that they would curse or at least denounce the author without perhaps even going through the book itself. But I am sustained by two considerations. In the first place, I have sincerely tried to uphold the dignity of history by telling the truth as it has appeared to me in the light of such judgment or intellect as God has vouchsafed to me. I have done no less—I could do no more. Secondly, the adverse criticisms I have made against Gandhi—and the most serious ones at that—have almost all been upheld by one or more of his most admiring devotees, perhaps in some unguarded moments of their lives or when they were free from the magic influence of their political *Guru*. It has been my endeavour to keep this fact constantly before the readers by extensive quotations, so that I may not be accused of any deliberate ill-will or malice against Gandhi. I have thus quoted, in support of my criticisms, those of even such devotees as Pandit Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. R. Das, Rajagopalachari, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, among others, not to speak of hostile critics like Subhas Bose, Sir Sankaran Nair, K. F. Nariman, and Ambedkar. The adverse criticisms by the devotees were, of course, merely occasional lapses which did not affect in the least their unflinching faith in the leadership of Gandhi. Nevertheless, the quotations of their views would prove that I cannot—and I certainly do not—claim any credit and do not deserve discredit for originality in the views condemning Gandhi, however unpalatable they might appear to be when taken together in the mass.

In order to enable the reader to appreciate or assess properly the views on Gandhi expressed in this volume, I would like to explain here my general estimate of Gandhi as a political leader which is naturally obscured in the text by the narration of events in a chronological order.

Since 1919 the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi, had developed into a fighting machine and revolutionary organization, non-violent in character but of tremendous strength and potentiality, on account of the mass support behind it. The ground for the popular upsurge was prepared beforehand as described in the preceding volume, but Gandhi's magic personality and saintly character, which has always a great appeal to Indian masses, transformed the latent energy of the people into strenuous political activity in an astonishingly short period of time. The two new weapons with which Gandhi decided to fight were Non-violent Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience—the two outward manifestations of the great principle which Gandhi described as *Satyagraha*. It was an old principle which, according to Gandhi, was preached by the Indian sages of yore, but he was the first to use it in politics. The nature and object of *Satyagraha*, as expounded by Gandhi, has been indicated in pp. 7 ff. It would be obvious to anybody who understands its real significance that none but a saintly person can really observe it in actual life, and it was beyond the power of ordinary men, including even those who played a prominent role in Indian politics under Gandhi's leadership. They made no secret of the fact that they adopted Non-violent Non-co-operation as a political expedient but not, like Gandhi, as a creed. Gandhi himself admitted, even late in life, that none of his followers believed in *Satyagraha* as a creed, though some accepted it as a political expediency in the absence of any more suitable way to fight the battle of India's freedom—implying thereby that they would change it the

moment they felt that some other course of action would be more helpful in achieving freedom. This was the reason why, as Gandhi himself admitted, "even 14 years of trial have failed to yield the anticipated result."

There is a popular notion, sustained by catching slogans, that Gandhi achieved India's freedom by the method of *Satyagraha* and thus laid down for the subject peoples all over the world a unique method for gaining independence without bloodshed. Of course, Gandhi's own statement leaves no doubt that *Satyagraha* had never any fair trial in India's struggle for freedom, and, as such, cannot claim any credit for it.

But there were other deep-seated differences between Gandhi and his followers. He placed the cult of non-violence above everything else—even above the independence of India. During the Second War he grew uneasy at the possibility that the British might grant independence to India, for that would mean India's participation in violent warfare ( p. 602 ). To him the Congress was a humanitarian association or an organization for the moral and spiritual regeneration of the world, and its aims and activities were to be regulated accordingly. But his followers looked upon the Congress as a purely political body whose sole object—and *raison d'etre*—was the achievement of the freedom of India. To Gandhi, not only was independence of India a minor issue as compared with the principle of non-violence, but, it is painful and strange to relate, he was even prepared to postpone *Swaraj* activity if thereby he could advance the interest of the Khilafat ( p. 96 ). It is on a par with his statement that he would, "in a sense, certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan if he wage war against the British Government" ( pp. 65-6 and f.n.), meaning thereby that India should not oppose the Amir if he invaded British India. Gandhi's conception of nationalism was also very peculiar. He fully approved of Muhammad Ali's

standpoint that one must be a Muslim (or Hindu) first, and an Indian afterwards ( p. 825, f.n., 16 ). As a matter of fact Gandhi realised, late in life, that a wide gulf had always separated him from his followers though they all submitted to his authority. This has been clearly explained by Pyarelal* and need not be discussed here. This fact would have been apparent to Gandhi long before if the Congress were guided by him on democratic principles. But Gandhi was a dictator who could not tolerate opposition. In 1930 he deliberately excluded from the Working Committe of the Congress those who differed from his views (p. 330). In his lengthy statement issued on 17 September, 1934, Gandhi said that if the Socialist Group gained ascendancy in the Congress he could not remain in it ( p. 538 ). Later, when one of his momentous decisions was opposed by Azad and Nehru he demanded that both should leave the Working Committee, and even formally wrote to Azad asking him to resign the Presidentship of the Congress ( p 639 ). The scene that he created after the meeting of the A. I. C. C. at Ahmadabad on 27 June, 1924 ( pp. 249-50 ), hardly befits a democratic leader. It is difficult to improve upon the following words with which Pyarelal, a close associate of Gandhi, has described the resulting state of things : "Gandhiji came to the conclusion that his personality was acting as an incubus and smothering free self-expression in the Congress and thereby arresting its natural growth, so that from being 'the most representative and democratic organisation' it stood in danger of degenerating into an organisation 'dominated by one personality' in which 'there was no play of reason.' They could never realise the full potency of truth or non-violence that way. For that they had to learn 'to think and act naturally.'"** This fully supports

* *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol, II, Chapter II.

** Ibid, p, 18.

what has been said above of blind faith in Gandhi. One of his admiring devotees referred to him as "beloved slave-driver" (p. 558). Gandhi realized at long last that slave-driving may be an agreeable pastime and a great source of strength to a leader, but it does not pay in the long run. For, like ordinary slaves, the slave-followers of Gandhi gradually turned against his leadership and revolted against his authority.

It is not often realized by many that since the failure of the 'Quit India' movement Gandhi's political influence waned more and more as the achievement of freedom approached nearer and nearer. He had very little share in the Congress negotiations with Cripps and practically none in those vital and momentous descisions which finally led to the freedom of India.

That Gandhi played a very great role in rousing the political consciousness of the masses nobody can possibly deny. But it would be a travesty of truth to give him the sole credit for the freedom of India, and sheer nonsense to look upon *Satyagraha* (or *Charka*, according to some) as the unique weapon by which it was achieved. As mentioned above, Gandhi's followers could not wield this weapon forged by him and therefore it never came into play. A successful *Satyagraha*, as conceived by Gandhi, would necessarily mean that the British had given up their hold on India in a mood of repentance or penitence for their past sinful acts in India. But of this we have no evidence whatsoever.

The two great ends of Gandhi's life, to which even the freedom of India was a subordinate one, were to inculcate in the masses the spirit of non-violence and to bring about unity between the Hindus and Muslims by a change of heart. He failed miserably in both and realized it only too well at the fag end of his life. The cult of non-violence never took root in the hearts of the people. Even during the lifetime of Gandhi it was definitely aban-

doned by new leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan in 1942, and it has not played any role in Indian politics ever since even under the stewardship of the devoted followers of Gandhi. As regards communal relations Gandhi began his political career by forging the closest bond of amity and co-operation between the Hindus and the Muslims such as had never been witnessed before. But it suffered a complete metamorphosis within a few years, and before Gandhi passed away he had the mortification to witness bitter hatred and hostility between the two communities growing from bad to worse every day—unprecedented in the annals of Indian history after the end of Muslim rule. The failure of his life's task was emphasized by a series of contests between the two communities, accompanied by the most horrible deeds of cruelty of a brutal nature, as if there was a fight between two savage races capable of no thought but that, regardless of all considerations of justice or mercy, their enemies should be exterminated.

The failure of Gandhi to achieve his two great ideals was almost inevitable. In the first case he did not make due allowance for human nature, as it is and always has been. As regards the second, he accepted, as fact, a purely imaginary fraternity, and completely ignored the fundamental differences between the Hindus and Muslims based on history, culture and tradition to which frequent reference has been made in these volumes. But though he failed, his earnest and life-long devotion to these two noble causes evokes our highest admiration, and his precept and example will always be stored as priceless treasures in India. He should not be judged merely by the result of his actions, but the high motive that inspired him should also be taken into account.

The failure to achieve the two great ideals of non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity led to the failure of Gandhi's third ideal, namely, to maintain the political unity

of India. For the cult of violence and communal strife were mainly responsible for the creation of Pakistan. As usual, Gandhi held fast to his ideal almost till the last, when his dream of a united India was rudely shattered by the action of his own followers. The tragedy of Gandhi's life was that these members of his inner council, who followed him for more than twenty years with unquestioned obedience, took the fatal steps leading to the partition of India without his knowledge, not to speak of his consent. Pyarelal mournfully observes: "Such a thing would have been inconceivable in olden days. Even when he was ranging over the length and breadth of India they did not fail to consult him before taking any vital decision"* Whether Gandhi was right and his followers wrong, does not concern us here. But it certainly shows that reason ultimately took the place of blind faith and devotion to Gandhi.

We may also refer to a few other cherished ideals of Gandhi. One of them was the universal adoption of *Charka* or spinning wheel and *Khaddar* or home-spun cloth. These might be economically helpful to certain classes, but the whole thing was carried to a ridiculous excess when, failing voluntary acceptance, at Gandhi's insistence, regular spinning was endowed with a mystic power and made an essential qualification for the membership of the Indian National Congress, and habitual wearing of *Khaddar* a necessary qualification for holding any office in the Congress organization. This was indeed a unique feature in a political organization, to which posterity will look back with amazement, not unmingled with a certain amount of amusement, as the idiosyncrasy of a great political leader. No wonder, that in popular view the semi-religious cult of *Charka*** shortly came to be regarded as a panacea for all evils—political, economic and social—from which India was suffering. That myth has been exploded and the *Charka* is now

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* Ibid, p. 35. ** Known as Sūtra-Yajña.

mostly heard of only in connection with the ceremonial function on the death or birth anniversary of Gandhi. But the *Charka* was really a symbol of Gandhi's undisguised contempt for, and open hostility towards, mechanised industry of all kinds, and a yearning to return to the primitive life which India led two thousand years ago. He elaborated these and his other socio-economic ideals in the *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule,* written by him as far back as 1908 or 1909. When G. K. Gokhale, whom Gandhi looked upon as his political *Guru,* read it, he expressed the hope that ere long Gandhi himself would think fit to destroy the book (p. 11). But far from doing so, Gandhi published a reprint of it more than twenty-five years later with the remark that he still upheld the views expressed therein. No doubt some of his concrete suggestions are likely to yield good results, provided they are kept within proper limits. But, as in the case of *Charka,* excessive zeal and undue emphasis on their importance would make some of them useless and sometimes even ridiculous.

The same remark applies to Gandhi's noble efforts for the uplift of the *Harijans,* i.e., the untouchables and the degraded classes in Hindu society. Following the great ideal of *Daridra-Narayan* preached by Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi organized a crusade against this great social iniquity with all his energy. Though the actual success attained by him may not be very great—for the evils are of long standing and of wide extent—there is no doubt that he quickened the social consciousness of the entire Hindu community, gave a concrete shape to the great movement, and securely laid the foundations on which others would be able to build in future. But here, again, his unduly excessive zeal for this side-issue led him to sacrifice the larger interests of the country (p. 475). He also overdid the part of the friend of the poor and the untouchables by travelling in the third class in the railway and occasionally living in the

Bhangi colony in Delhi, causing heavy expenditure to the Government for making his journey and residence comfortable. Sarojini Naidu is said to have once exclaimed: 'if Bapu (Gandhi) had only known what it cost the State to keep him in a state of poverty"! It would be strange indeed if he had not known it and regarded the amenities which he enjoyed in the third class Railway compartment and in the Bhangi colony as quite normal. We have to remember all these in order to form a proper estimate of Gandhi's personality and, in that light, to judge of his views and activities narrated in this volume.

Next to Gandhi, the most dominant figure in the struggle for India's freedom was undoubtedly Subhas Chandra Bose. His unique personality shone forth when he, alone of all the leading figures in the inner circle of the Congress, kept himself unaffected by the magic charm of Mahatma Gandhi. Hugh Toye, an English biographer of Bose, reckons among the 'undeniable faults' of the latter his assertion "not only that the British were wrong but that Gandhi was wrong, that the Indian struggle had no place for mystics and vague philosophers." Perhaps not a few, and some day many, would regard these very assertions as forming one of Bose's many titles to fame. Few would relish even today Toye's taunting remark that Bose regarded himself "so right that he must escape from poor, enslaved misguided India, in order to save her not only from the British, but from herself." It seems that outraged British sentiments, fuming and fretting over the loss of Indian Empire, have not yet forgiven Bose. Their instinctive recognition of Gandhi as friend and Bose as the worst enemy would one day constitute the greatest tribute to Subhas Bose as the fighter for India's freedom.

The fundamental difference between Gandhi and Subhas Bose is quite obvious. Gandhi's ideal in life was the establishment of *Satyagraha*, and everything else was

secondary; even the freedom of India had no meaning or value to him in case it involved a sacrifice of this ideal (pp. 602, 613). To Subhas Bose, on the other hand, the freedom of India was the only aim and object in life and no means was too mean for that purpose. Agreement between the two was, therefore, impossible. It is a sad commentary on contemporary politics that most of the Congress leaders *at heart* agreed with Bose in this respect, but sided with Gandhi, even though, as Nehru put it, "they did not agree with his (Gandhi's) philosophy of life or even with many of his ideas, and often did not even understand him" (p. 557). But, as stated above, late in life they revolted against Gandhi and discarded his ideal. Their belated wisdom is a measure of the greatness of Bose who was never tired of pointing out the right way long before the others would recognize it as such.

The third great figure in the political field during the period under review was Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In order to correctly assess the value of his work, we should not judge him merely from the point of view of the freedom movement in India, as has been done in this volume for obvious reasons. Jinnah, at least in his later life, put up a brave fight. It was, however, a fight not for the freedom of India, except in a very qualified sense, but for the freedom of the Muslims from the tyrannical yoke of the Hindus, as he put it. He won the fight; the cult of violence decided the issue. To what extent Gandhi's cult of non-violence may claim credit for the freedom of India is a matter of opinion. But there is no doubt that the creation of Pakistan was the triumph of violence—in its naked and most brutal form—and of the leadership of Jinnah. Nobody can reasonably doubt that India would have surely attained independence, sooner or later, even without Gandhi, but it is extremely doubtful whether there would have been a Pakistan without Jinnah. So, if

we are to judge by the result alone, the events of 1946-7 testify to the superiority of violence to non-violence in practical politics, and of Jinnah to the leaders of the Congress. But this affords an illustration of the blunder that is often committed by hasty inference drawn from the immediate result, apparently flowing from a certain course of action, without weighing the force of other circumstances. It ought to serve as a corrective to those who look upon Gandhi as having wrested independence from the British by waving his magic wand of *Satyagraha*. In any case Jinnah stands out as the most successful political leader of the period. Whatever the Hindus might think of Jinnah, he has secured a high place in the history of the Muslim nation, a term at which we can hardly cavil after the foundation of Pakistan. He carried to its logical consummation the work that was begun by Sir Syed Ahmad.

Either by habit or by convention the name of Gandhi alone is in popular view associated with the freedom of India. The truth or justice of this view has been briefly discussed above and in detail in this volume. But incidental reference should be made here to other agencies at work towards the same end. Among these, which are often ignored, I have laid special stress on the revolutionary movements in India and the formation of I.N.A. by Subhas Bose. But it is necessary to remember that the battle for India's freedom was also being fought against Britain, though indirectly, by Hitler in Europe and Japan in Asia. None of these different factors scored direct or complete success, but it is hard to deny that it was the cumulative effect of all these that gained freedom for India.

I have not said much about the Moderate Party after its leaders left the Congress in 1918. The great stalwarts of the Party had mostly passed away, but there still remained some eminent persons who had made valuable contribution to the freedom movement in India.

Surendra Nath Banerji, for example, should always live in history as the father of Indian nationalism, whatever one might think of his views and activities after 1918. But the fact remains that the Moderate leaders did not play any significant role in the movement or struggle for freedom as it shaped itself after 1918. The Moderate leaders, however, contend that their policy of co-operation under the new Reform scheme considerably helped the cause of freedom, and, if sincerely and earnestly followed by the country as a whole, would not have been less fruitful than the policy that was actually pursued.

This raises a controversial issue, namely, whether the achievement of freedom would not have been equally facilitated by following some method other than that pursued by the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi. Such hypothetical questions are always difficult to answer. But it is possible to argue that equal, if not greater, success could have been attained by following the policy of Responsive Co-operation initiated by Tilak and accepted by Gandhi till the end of 1919. Its essence was to accept and work the reforms that were offered, and carry on mass agitation for more and more till the goal was attained. In the circumstances created by the Second World War this procedure would have gained enormous strength and could scarcely have failed in the long run. Whether this process would have involved greater delay nobody can definitely say. But, according to a school of thought, it is very likely that the transfer of power under this process would have been far more smooth and the partition of India, with all its attendant horrors, might, *perhaps*, have been avoided. In any case, they say, it would have saved India from the troubles and evils which necessarily resulted from the sudden transfer of power to the hands of a Party organization without any experience of administration. Such a danger, it may be pointed out, was fully anticipated by

the Congress leaders themselves. Jawaharlal Nehru, for example, had categorically declared that the "Congress as such would automatically cease to exist" after independence.* Gandhi expressed the same view and held that 'the Congress should continue for national welfare from social, moral and economic point of view only, but no member should accept a pay job under the State.'** A gradual transfer of power, i.e., transformation of the Executive and the Legislature by systematic grant of more and more power to the elected representatives of the people, was neither theoretically absurd nor an impracticable proposition. But these speculations are at present of little practical value and may be safely left to the verdict of history in future.

It is a great relief to me to have been able to complete the *History of Freedom Movement in India*. Nobody is more conscious than I myself of the many shortcomings in this work which I had to undertake, single-handed, at an advanced age, when my long-cherished project of a co-operative work under the patronage of the Government of India fell through under circumstances, narrated in the Appendix to Vol. I. I can only crave the indulgence of my readers for the many errors of omission and commission in this pioneer work which is only intended to be a basis for a better and more thorough treatment of the subject in future.

I have nothing to add to what I have said in the Prefaces to the first two volumes regarding the scope and nature of this work. So far as the present volume is concerned a word of explanation is necessary in regard to the somewhat disproportionate space allotted to the description of the atrocities committed by the Government during the Civil Disobedience Campaign of 1932. It is always difficult to secure an authentic account of these nefarious deeds, for the people affected are prone to exaggerate, and the Government to minimise the gravity of the crimes perpe-

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* *Nehru on Gandhi*, p. 60.

** Ibid. Also cf the 'Last Will and Testament' of Gandhi.

trated in the name of law and order. Fortunately, so far as the atrocities of 1932 are concerned, we have the report of a small Delegation, consisting of three Britishers and one Indian, sent by India League, London. They made a prolonged tour, examined the victims of Government oppression, and submitted a lengthy report, describing the outrages of which they could secure positive evidence. It is difficult to conceive of a more authoritative, independent and impartial body than this Delegation to investigate the allegations against the British rulers in India. As the repressive measures taken by the Government of India against Indian fighters for freedom have been more or less of a uniform pattern, being directed by agencies following the same tradition, the report of this Delegation may be taken as an album of fairly representative pictures depicting the sufferings the Indian patriots had to bear for the sake of their motherland. Curiously enough, though the report of the Delegation was printed, not a single copy, so far as I know, is available in India, though I found one in the Library of the University of Chicago, U.S.A. Evidently, the Government of India took good care to prevent this very damaging report from reaching India. As the Indian readers are not likely to have access to this very important report, I thought it expedient to give copious extracts from it in order to convey some idea of the barbarities practised by the British Government which Bertrand Russell, in his Preface to the printed Report, pronounced to be as abominable as the misdeeds of the Nazis in Germany.

In conclusion, I may draw the attention of my readers to what I have said in the Prefaces to the first two volumes (Vol. I, pp. xiv-xv, xviii-xx ; Vol. II, pp. xvii-xxii) regarding the difficulty of writing on events which are still in the memory of us all. Those observations apply with greater force to the present volume which deals with some leading figures who are still alive or have died during the life-

time of most of my readers. Passions and prejudices die hard and personal opinions, once formed, are not likely to be altered soon. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the views I have expressed may not commend themselves to any, and perhaps a large section of my countrymen would bitterly resent some of them. But I find consolation in the wise saying of one of the greatest Sanskrit poets to the effect, that 'there may be somewhere, at some time, somebody who would agree with my views and appreciate them ; for time is eternal and the world is wide and large'. I may assure my readers that it has been a very painful task to have to comment adversely on the views and actions of some of our great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who are held in the highest veneration. I shall not be surprised if what I have said about them hurts the feelings of many. My only excuse is that it is impossible to avoid all such comments in writing on a subject such as is treated in this book. I may, however, assure my readers that I have always tried to tell the truth, and in doing so followed no other guide than the light of my own judgment, sincerely formed, with malice to none and goodwill to all, and without any personal or ulterior motive of any kind.

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4 Bepin Pal Road
Calcutta-26 R.C. Majumdar
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# BOOK IV

## NON-CO-OPERATION AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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# CHAPTER I.

# THE YEAR 1919

The year 1919 may be looked upon as an *annus mirabilis* which marked a definite stage in the history of India's struggle for freedom. It was memorable for four outstanding events which shaped India's future relations with Britain. These are :

1. The Rowlatt Bills and their consequence—the reign of terror in the Panjab, culminating in Jallianwalla Bagh massacre and barbarous enforcement of martial law in the Panjab.

2. The emergence of M. K. Gandhi of Satyagraha fame in South Africa as the political leader in India.

3. The passing of the Government of India Act on the basis of the Montford Report.

4. Revival of Pan-Islamism as a force in Indian politics.

Although these factors were inter-connected to a certain extent, it will be convenient to deal with them separately even at the risk of some repetition.

## I. ROWLATT BILLS

In pursuance of the policy of reform cum repression or vice versa, followed by Lord Minto and Lord Hardinge, Lord Chelmsford, as mentioned above,[1] appointed a committee to investigate into the revolutionary movement and recommend legislation that may be deemed necessary to suppress it. The Committee was presided over by Mr. Justice Rowlatt of U. K., and consisted of four other members, two of whom were Indians and two, British

officials in India. The Committee prepared a detailed account of the revolutionary movement in India on the basis of the materials supplied by the Government of India, and the legislation recommended by it was based on the draft prepared by the same Government to replace the Defence of India Act which would automatically cease to be operative after the end of the World War. Montagu had warned Justice Rowlatt that the plan already hatched by the Government of India was a plan of "Government by means of internment and police",[1a] but in vain. After making a detailed survey of the revolutionary movement in different parts of India, which has been described above,[2] the Committee recommended special legislation which sought to curtail the liberty of the people in a drastic manner.[3] Two Bills were prepared on the basis of these recommendations.[4] The one that was actually passed into law, namely the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919, provided for speedy trial of offences by a Special Court, consisting of three High Court Judges. There was no appeal from the decision of this Court, which could meet *in camera* and take into consideration evidence not admissible under the Indian Evidence Act. The Provincial Government could order any person, *on suspicion*, "to furnish security or to notify his residence, or to reside in a particular area or to abstain from any specified act, or finally to report himself to the police". The Provincial Government was also given powers to search a place and arrest a suspected person without warrant and keep him in confinement, "in such place and under such conditions and restrictions as it may specify." The Bill was strenuously opposed throughout the country by Indians of all shades of political opinion. They argued that apart from serious objections to such legislation in time of peace, when the revolutionary crimes were already on the decline, it was

the height of unwisdom to undertake it at a time when the constitutional reforms were in the offing,—for it was sure to destroy even the slender chance, if any, that these reforms might offer to improve the political situation in India. On the other hand it was urged by the Government that India might be well described as almost in a state of unarmed revolt, and the underground revolutionary movement, spreading over a wide region in India, was far from being rooted out altogether. This view of the Government cannot be brushed aside altogether. Subsequent events have shown that the revolutionary crimes always increased after the withdrawal of coercive legislation, and it can hardly be gainsaid that there was no peace but an undeclared war in India against the British rule. From the point of view of the security of British rule in India—the main consideration which determined the policy of the Government of India—their action cannot be summarily pronounced to be either unjust or unwise. The real point of criticism is that they never realized the true import or significance of the situation from the point of view of nationalist India. But no autocratic Government has ever realized it in time, though wise men pointed out the real nature and solution of the problem. Lord Morley declared with truth that "the best way to get rid of Sinn Fein was to grant self-government to Ireland." But he never thought of his own remedy while he was responsible for putting down Sinn Feinism in India. The Home (British) Government took nearly a century to realize this truth in respect of Ireland, and not until the situation was well out of hand. One could hardly blame the Government of India for not realizing it in course of a decade.

As could be easily anticipated, numerous public meetings were held to protest against this lawless law. All the non-official Indian members of the Indian

Legislative Council were united in opposing the measure, and four of them resigned by way of protest. Indeed such a unique opposition of Indians to a Government measure was never witnessed since the Partition of Bengal. But the Government of India, like the Bourbons in France, never benefited from past experience and remained adamant. The Bill was passed on 18th March—the officials alone voting in its favour—and placed on the Statute Book on March 21, 1919. The most curious part of the whole episode is that while the new Act practically remained a dead letter—thus falsifying the anticipations and arguments of both its framers and opponents—it brought into limelight a political leader who was destined to achieve worldwide fame and distinction such as has seldom been the lot of any non-official political leader in any country. This was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who has shed lustre on India's struggle for freedom.

## II. THE EMERGENCE OF GANDHI AS POLITICAL LEADER OF INDIA

### 1. Early Career in South Africa

M. K. Gandhi was born on 2 October, 1869, in a well-to-do family at Porbandar, in Kathiawar Peninsula (Gujarat). In 1888 he proceeded to England and qualified himself for the Bar. In 1891 he began to practise in the Courts, but was a complete failure as a lawyer both in Rajkot and Bombay. In Bombay he was insulted by the English Political Agent of the Kathiawar States. "This shock", says Gandhi in his autobiography, "changed the course of my life."[5] Anxious to escape, he accepted the offer of a firm of Porbandar Muslims to act as their lawyer in South Africa for a year. Gandhi arrived in Natal in May, 1893. Once while going to Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, he entered a First Class compartment in

the train. He was asked by the Railway officials to go to the Van compartment. As he refused, he was forcibly thrown out with his luggage and had to sit the whole night in the waiting room. Years later, when asked about "the most creative experiences in his life", Gandhi referred to this incident.

There was nothing unusual in the humiliating treatment meted out to Gandhi. For, the two lakhs of Indians who lived in South Africa in 1893 were subjected to all kinds of insults and indignities, and were described in the Statute books as "Semi-barbarous Asiatics". When the South African Government introduced a Bill to deprive the Indians of their right to elect members to the Natal Legislative Assembly, Gandhi organized a campaign against it. Though the Bill was passed, a new life was infused into the Indians under the leadership of Gandhi.

An incident occurred in 1896 which gave a foretaste of the mettle that the new leader was made of. During his stay in India in that year Gandhi had issued a pamphlet describing the humiliations imposed upon the Indians in South Africa, which enraged the Whites in that country. On his return to Natal (December, 1896) Gandhi was informed, even before he and his family left the steamer, that his life was in danger. He was advised to land at dusk when the Port Superintendent would escort them home. Gandhi sent his wife and children in a carriage, but refusing to enter the city like a thief at dusk, walked on foot. As soon as he landed, a crowd gathered round him and pelted him with stones, brickbats and rotten eggs. Then they began to batter and kick him, and even when he fainted, they continued boxing and battering him. The wife of the Police Superintendent, who was passing by, came to his rescue, and saved his life.

In spite of all this Gandhi formed an Ambulance Corps to aid the British during the Boer War and rendered

great service which was highly applauded. He hoped that this voluntary service would appeal to the South Africans' sense of fair play and moderate the hostility of the Whites to coloured Asiatics. But the was soon undeceived. For, instead of decreasing, the tension waxed. Yet Gandhi joined the British army with a platoon of 24 Indian stretcher bearers during the Zulu rebellion of 1906. He volunteered, he said, because "the British empire existed for the welfare of the world", and he had a "genuine sense of loyalty" to it.

But ere long Gandhi's loyalty was shaken by a new Act which required all Indians in Transvaal to get themselves registered with finger prints like criminals, on pain of severe penalties. Gandhi again took the lead in opposing it. After exhausting all peaceful means of redress such as petitions, deputations, interviews and correspondence, he decided to defy the law, by refusing to register, give finger-prints, and receive permits. On September 11, 1906, Gandhi addressed a mass meeting at Johannesburg and called upon the assembled people—about three thousand in number—to resist the insulting ordinance, called by them 'Black Act', and go to jail, or, if need be, die. The people took an oath to resist the law at all costs.

This was the beginning of that movement, technically known as *Satyagraha*, which is similar to Passive Resistance with the difference that it eschewed violence of any kind in thought, words, and deed at any stage.

The scope of *Satyagraha* campaign was extended to fight against two other disabilities newly imposed—one prohibiting the entry of the Indians into Transvaal and another declaring all Indian marriages to be illegal. Women joined *Satyagraha* and a large number, including both Gandhi and his wife, was sent to prison. About 6,000 Indian miners in New Castle went on sympathetic strike, and would not yield even though they were driven from their lodgings

and had to live in the open with their women and children. Gandhi put himself at their head, and on October 28, 1913, marched with more than two thousand men, 127 women, and 57 children to the border of Transvaal to offer *Satyagraha*. Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. The strikers were also arrested and taken back to New Castle. "The labourers were brave men, and they flatly declined to work on the mines with the result that they were brutally whipped......(and) kicked......But the poor labourers patiently put up with all their tribulations." There were strikes and *Satyagrahas* by women in other places in sympathy with New Castle miners. The Government resorted to firing which resulted in a number of casualties. The whole Indian community rose as one man against the tyranny of the Whites.

The grim struggle was being watched with sympathy and admiration in India, and even the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, entered a vigorous protest on behalf of the Indians. Ultimately, the South African Government realized that they could not "put twenty thousand Indians in jail", and arrived at a settlement with Gandhi by removing some of the glaring indignities and iniquities suffered by the Indians in South Africa. The *Satyagraha* campaign, which had commenced in September, 1906, came to an end with the passing of the Indian Relief Act of 1914.[6]

## 2. Satyagraha

As the new principle and technique of *Satyagraha*, which Gandhi initiated with success in South Africa, formed the dominant element in India's struggle for freedom since 1919, it is necessary to explain briefly its nature and significance. This is by no means an easy task. For, in the first place, *Satyagraha* is a blend of philosophical, ethical and mystic elements which it is not easy to comprehend for those who are uninitiated in the principle and its practice.

Secondly, *Satyagraha*, in its final form, was the result of a gradual evolution, even in the mind of Gandhi, during a period extending over more than thirty years. Gandhi himself has expounded it on different occasions in many different ways in his writings, speeches and actions.

Thirdly, a voluminous literature has grown up on the philosophy of *Satyagraha* treating it from a mystic, psychological or religious point of view, which is not material to our present purpose. I shall therefore confine myself to the general features of *Satyagraha* as a guiding principle or moving force in political actions of masses or individuals.

The aim of *Satyagraha* is the conversion of the opponent to one's own view by self-suffering, and not by violence. How it triumphs over the opponent is thus described : "It involves self-chosen suffering and humiliation for the resisters. If it is effective, it is so by working on the conscience of those against whom it is being used, sapping their confidence in the exclusive rightness of their case, making their physical strength impotent, and weakening their resolution by insinuating a sense of guilt for the sufferings they have a part in causing."[7]

Gandhi originally described his movement in South Africa as 'Passive Resistance'. The word *Satyagraha* was deliberately substituted for it later, both because Gandhi felt ashamed to use an English word and also because he wanted to emphasize that there was an essential difference between his movement and the Passive Resistance. As Gandhi himself put it : "*Satyagraha* differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end ; whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest, and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form."[8]

This is further elucidated by a staunch follower of

Gandhi in the following words : "Passive Resiatance is a weapon of the weak. It does not eschew violence as a matter of principle, but only because of the lack of the means of violence or out of sheer expediency. It would use arms if and when they are available, or when there is a reasonable chance of success. Love has no place in it. Satyagraha, on the other hand, is the law of love, the way of love for all."[9]

Non-violence, which forms the very basis of *Satyagraha*, is thus expounded by Gandhi : "When a person claims to be non-violent, he is expected not to be angry with one who has injured him. He will not wish him harm ; he will wish him well ; he will not swear at him ; he will not cause him any physical hurt. He will put up with all the injury to which he is subjected by the wrong-doer. Thus non-violence is complete innocence. Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill-will against all that lives. It therefore embraces even sub-human life, not excluding noxious insects or beasts....

"In contradistinction to passive resistance, *Satyagraha* is the law of love, the way of love for all. It eschews violence absolutely as a matter of principle, at all stages and in all forms. It can never go hand in hand with any kind of violent activity involving injury to person or property. The idea behind it is not to destroy or harass the opponent, but to convert him or win him over by sympathy, patience, and self-suffering. Whilst *Satyagraha* hates all evil and would never compromise with it, it approaches the evil-doer through love. The *Satyagrahi* has infinite trust in human nature and in its inherent goodness."[10]

Thus the basic assumption of *Satyagraha* is the essential goodness of human nature which is bound to triumph over temporary aberration if faced with love and self-suffering on the part of his opponent or rather the victim of that temporary aberration. In a more philosophic

phraseology it is the triumph of the soul-force over the brute-force. Gandhi emphasized the fact that the very high ideal of *Satyagraha* could be practised by even the common people for achieving their political ends. Thus he said : "I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the *rishis* and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute".

Gandhi himself has referred to non-co-operation and civil resistance (meaning probably the same thing as Civil Disobedience) as the two offshoots of *Satyagraha*. In addition to these two the *hartal* (temporary strike), purificatory fast, picketing, non-violent raids or marches (as on salt depots in 1930), and fasting, either for a short and fixed period or unto death, are also reckoned by some to be forms of *Satyagraha*. Examples of all of these will occur in course of the narrative of events and need not be described here in detail.

### 3. Satyagraha in India

Gandhi left South Africa for good and returned to India in January, 1915. He seems to have been almost completely out of touch with the currents of political life in India after the *Swadeshi* movement. His views on it have been quoted above[11], but it is somewhat strange that he was unacquainted with the ideology of Arabinda, specially the Passive Resistance. According to his own confession he imbibed the ideas of Passive Resistance from the writings of Tolstoy and Thoreau, but he never refers to Arabinda Ghose who propounded in detail the ideas of passive resistance and non-co-operation at the very moment when he (Gandhi) was carrying on the campaign of *Satyagraha* in South Africa.[12] Even when thousands of Indian youths were carrying on a life and death struggle to get

rid of the British yoke, and the Government of Lord Minto was passing measures of repression one after another, Gandhi felt "a genuine sense of loyalty to the British Government" and accordingly volunteered his services during the Zulu rebellion of 1906. "I bore no grudge against the Zulus, they had harmed no Indians. I had doubts about the rebellion itself". So wrote Gandhi, but yet he offered to form an Indian Ambulance Corps to aid the Natal Government, which had passed the most humiliating laws against the Indian settlers. Gandhi justified his action by saying, "I then believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world. A genuine sense of loyalty prevented me from even wishing ill to the Empire."[13]

While a crusade for *Swaraj* or political emancipation was convulsing India, Gandhi was preoccupied with the social and ethical future of the Indians. His idea of *Swaraj* was very different. In his book *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1908 in Gujrati, he cared little whether India achieved her political goal and became a self-governing colony like Canada, and also decried the attempt to set up in India the parliamentary form of democratic government such as obtained in Great Britain.[14] Indeed the *Hind Swaraj* depicts an ideal of *Swaraj* and civilisation to which it would be difficult for most Indians of this century to subscribe. When Gokhale saw the English translation of this book in 1912 "he thought it so crude and hastily conceived that he prophesied that Gandhi himself would destroy the book after spending a year in India."[15] But his prophecy did not prove true. For even in 1938 Gandhi wrote : "I might change the language here and there if I had to rewrite the booklet. But after the stormy thirty years through which I have since passed, I have seen nothing to make me alter the views expounded in it."[16]

Gandhi's loyalty to the British—a loyalty impervious to the wave of nationalism that was sweeping over India—would have struck dumb even the most moderate of the Moderates in Indian politics. On 9 October, 1908, he wrote to the Governor of Madras: "I should be uninterested in the fact as to who rules (India), the important consideration being how he ruled." At that very moment Indians of all shades of public opinion looked upon self-government as their immediate or ultimate goal, and repeated the dictum of a British Prime Minister, uttered only a few years before, that "good government was never a substitute for self-government." During the First World War, while in England, he was opposed to those Indians who wanted to take advantage of Britain's need to serve the interests of their country. He formed an Ambulance Corps whose members suffered all kinds of insult and humiliation at the hands of the British.

On his arrival in India in January, 1915, Gandhi himself realized that he was a misfit in politics, and accepted Gokhale as his political *guru*. Gokhale was deeply impressed by his wide and liberal humanism (though not by his political ideas) and was keen on admitting him to the 'Servants of India Society'. But the other members of the Society did not like the idea on account of the great difference between their methods and ideals and those of Gandhi, who thereupon set up an *Ashram* at Ahmadabad on the banks of the Sabarmati (1915).

The main object of this *Ashram* was to acquaint India with the method of *Satyagraha*. The first opportunity came when in 1917 the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford refused permission to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to introduce a Bill for the immediate abolition of the Indenture system by which Indian labourers had practically to work as slaves in British plantations. Gandhi took up the challenge and started a campaign for abolition of the

system before 31 July, 1917. Before that date the Government announced that further recruitment would be stopped as a special war measure under the Defence of India Act. No occasion therefore arose to put *Satyagraha* to test.

Gandhi next came into conflict with the Government by taking up the cause of the peasants of Champaran, in Bihar, who were being ruthlessly oppressed by the Indigo planters. Joined by some local leaders, Gandhi proceeded to make an inquiry on the spot. He was served with a notice to quit the place, but he defied the order. He was tried in the Court on 18 April, 1917, but the case was withdrawn by the Government. Gandhi thereupon proceeded with his inquiry which revealed such staggering facts about the oppression practised by the indigo-planters on the cultivators that the Government abolished the iniquitous system by legislation. This was the first triumph of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* movement in India. It may be pointed out that more than fifty years before, the indigo-cultivators obtained a similar victory in Bengal against the planters.[17]

The next scene of Gandhi's activity was Ahmadabad. The mill-hands there had been agitating for a long time for an increase of pay, and Gandhi advised them to go on strike. They agreed to eschew violence and took a pledge not to resume work until their terms were accepted or the mill-owners agreed to refer the matter to arbitration. For two weeks everything went on well, but then the strikers lost their zeal and began 'to totter'. Thereupon Gandhi told the mill-hands assembled in a meeting, that unless they rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, he will not touch any food. This fast, the precursor of many that were to follow, had the desired effect, both upon the labourers as well as upon the mill-owners, and a settlement was reached after 21 days' strike.[18]

Immediately after the strike was over Gandhi plunged himself heart and soul into a *Satyagraha* campaign at Kheda (or Kaira) District. Under the Land Revenue Rules, the cultivators were entitled to suspension of the revenue assessment if the yield of the crops fell below 25 per cent. The cultivators claimed that this was the case, but the Government officials denied and refused the popular demand for arbitration. When all attempts to settle the matter failed Gandhi advised the cultivators to resort to *Satyagraha*. They took pledge not to pay the revenue and suffer all the consequences, including attachment of movables and forfeiture of lands. Gandhi was joined by a number of public men including Vallabhbhai Patel. In spite of occasional lapses the cultivators stood firm. Their fear of officials passed away ; they stood up against threats of coercion and intimidation by them and even faced with equanimity attachments of their property and notices for forfeiture of land. The Government was ultimately forced to offer terms which were acceptable to the cultivators.[19]

## 4. Agitation against Rowlatt Bills

In spite of his loyalty to the British and a strong dislike to embarrass the Government by pressing the demands for Home Rule during the War, Gandhi made it clear to the Viceroy, as indeed his activities at Kheda and Champaran clearly showed, that he would not tolerate "the tyranny and wrong-doing of the officials." True to his principle Gandhi had no hesitation in deciding to offer *Satyagraha* if the Bills to give effect to the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee were passed into law. In spite of his earnest pleading with the Viceroy, one of the two Bills was passed on 18 March, 1919. In the meantime Gandhi had called a small conference attended by about twenty persons, including Vallabhbhai Patel and Sarojini Naidu. The *Satyagraha* pledge was drafted and signed by

all present on 24 February, 1919.

The pledge read as follows :-

"Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. I of 1919 and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. II of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee, to be hereafter appointed, may think fit, and we further affirm that in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property."[20]

A separate body called *Satyagraha Sabha* was established with Gandhi as its President, and its headquarters were fixed at Bombay. Bulletins were issued, public meetings were held and more people signed the *Satyagraha* pledge. Gandhi also proposed that the country should observe a general *hartal*—all the people should suspend business for a day, and observe it as one of fasting and prayer as a fitting preliminary to *Satyagraha* which is a process of self-purification.[21] The idea was welcomed by Rajagopal-achari and others, and Gandhi drafted a brief appeal. The date of the *hartal* was fixed on 30th March, 1919, but was subsequently changed to 6th April. Gandhi's appeal for *hartal* met with a wonderful response all over India. It began at Delhi on March 30, the date originally fixed, as the notice of change reached too late. It was a unique success, but the Police checked the procession by opening fire which caused many casualties. Similar was the case in other localities such as Lahore and Amritsar and urgent invitations by wire came to Gandhi to visit those localities. Thus the *hartal* of 6th April, 1919,

marked out Gandhi as the all-India leader. The blood of the martyrs soon consecrated him as the uncrowned King of India.

### 5. The Jallianwalla Bagh and Martial Law in the Panjab

Gandhi's leadership was severely put to the test during the great upheaval that followed his call to observe *hartal* all over India on April 6. Report of successful *hartal* came from all quarters. It is not possible to refer to them all, but a few may be described as typical. Gandhi was himself present in Bombay and the *hartal* in that city was a complete success. In the morning thousands, after a bath in the sea at Chaupatty, marched in a procession to Thakurdvar. The Muslim citizens also joined the procession in large numbers and they took some of the Hindu leaders to a neighbouring mosque where Mrs. Naidu and Gandhi delivered speeches. It was suggested that the people should take the pledges of Swadeshi and Hindu-Muslim unity then and there. Gandhi rejected the proposal on the ground that such pledges should be taken only after due deliberation, and suggested that those who wanted to take them should assemble on the following morning. His wisdom and insight were proved when only a few persons turned up next day to take the pledges. It indicated a great drawback in the popular movements in India, namely, enthusiasm for exciting work but indifference, if not positive dislike, for sustained and constructive efforts. Another characteristic feature of the Bombay *hartal* was the beginning of Civil Disobedience by the sale of two proscribed books written by Gandhi which sold like hot cakes.

But the *hartal* did not pass off so smoothly in Delhi, where, as mentioned above, it was prematurely held on March 30. There were clashes between the police and the people, the military fired upon the crowd, killing a few

and wounding a large number. This also happened in other localities.

Swami Shraddhananda, a man of irreproachable character, and held in the highest esteem all over India, submitted a written statement about the happenings at Delhi which may be summed up as follows :-

'A notice to the following effect was posted and circulated at Delhi : "The 30th of March should be observed as a day of mourning, all business and shops should be closed, and one should spend the day in wishing well for the country, in reforming his own mind and in philanthropic work. Every woman, man, and child should attend the meeting at 5 O'clock." At about 2 O'clock the people who were asking the shops at the Railway station to be closed were threatened by a European Railway official. When he was told that it was no business of his to interfere, he whistled to the police who arrested two men. The people said that if their men were given up they would go away. Then the police began to belabour them with sticks, and soldiers with a machine gun were arriving. As soon as this report was conveyed to me by some gentlemen who had come running from the Railway station, I proceeded there and heard that the machine gun had fired indiscriminately and about a dozen had either been killed or wounded, the bodies being dragged into the Station yard.

'I addressed a public meeting which was attended by about 50,000 people, and asked the huge audience to follow me and disperse quietly to their homes. When we approached the Clock Tower we found the Gurkhas in the middle of the road, in double file, facing both ways. On seeing us they moved to the right foot-board, but as soon as we came near them a rifle was fired into the crowd. There was a great commotion but I pacified the men and went alone to the Goorkhas and asked them why they were

firing on innocent people. They pointed two rifles at me and said "*tom ko ched denge*" (we will pierce you). I was clad in my *sanyasi* dress and, standing quietly before them, said, "*main khada hun, goli maro*" ( I am standing, fire ). At once eight or ten more rifles were aimed at my breast and insolent threats continued to be made. The crowd was about to rush, saying : "Let us die, and not you", when I stopped them by waving my hand and reminding them of their vow. After I had stood there for three minutes with the rifles pointed at my breast, a European officer came and asked the solitary policeman present there whether he had ordered firing. I then left with the people following me.

'The dead bodies and the wounded were removed to the Police Hospital. The English nurses refused to attend them, saying : "They have been well served. They are rebels and we wont attend on them", or words to that effect. It was only after a deputation had waited on the Chief Commissioner that the dead bodies were delivered to their relations and the wounded were taken to the civil hospital and properly dressed'.[22]

Delhi observed also the *hartal* on April 6. More than 10,000 people assembled that day and there were more than eight overflow meetings. Popular excitement ran very high, both at Delhi and Amritsar ; so the local leaders invited Gandhi to visit these places as they expected his presence to have a pacifying effect on the people. The Government, however, thought otherwise.

On the night of April 7 Gandhi started for Delhi and Amritsar. Before the train had reached Palwal Station, about forty miles from Delhi, he was served with a written order prohibiting him from entering the boundary of the Panjab as his presence was likely to disturb the peace of the Province. Gandhi was asked to get down, but refused to do so. At Palwal he was taken out by the police and put in a train for Bombay under police escort, on 10 April.

As soon as Gandhi reached Bombay he was set free, but was told that the news of his arrest had roused the people to a pitch of mad frenzy and an outbreak was apprehended every minute at Pydhuni. So Gandhi proceeded there and the huge crowd, mad with joy, formed a procession. There was a body of mounted Police, and brickbats were raining down from above, but nothing untoward happened until the procession was stopped by a body of mounted Police who had arrived there to prevent it from proceeding further towards the Fort area. The crowd had almost broken through the Police cordon, when the Officer-in-charge gave the order to disperse the crowd. At once the mounted party charged upon the densely packed crowd brandishing their lances as they went. The lances just grazed the car of Gandhi, when the lancers swiftly passed by, blindly cutting their way through that seething mass of humanity. Some got trampled under foot, others were badly mauled and crushed.

Disturbances had also broken out at Ahmadabad as the rumour spread that not only Gandhi but Anasuya Ben had also been put under arrest. The mill-hands were infuriated at her rumoured arrest, struck work and committed acts of incendiarism and violence, and a sergeant had been done to death. The officers fired on the crowd several times and placed Ahmadabad under martial law. Gandhi proceeded to Ahmadabad and learnt that an attempt had been made to pull up the rails near the Nadiad railway station, and that a Government officer had been murdered in Viramgam. With the permission of the Government Gandhi held a public meeting on April 13, and tried to bring home to the people the sense of their wrong. He declared a penitential fast of three days for himself, and appealed to the people to go on a similar fast for a day. He also asked those who had committed acts of violence to confess their guilt and the Government to condone their crimes. But there was no response from either side. Peace was, however, restored.

According to Hunter Committee's Report, "two officials were killed, among the rioters 28 are known to have been killed and 123 wounded. It is probable there were other casualties. Telegraph wires were cut at eight places in Ahmadabad and at fourteen places outside. The value of the property destroyed by the rioters at Ahmadabad was approximately nine and a half lakhs of Rupees."

Gandhi did not mince matters. He recounted the misdeeds of the people in a speech at Ahmadabad on 14 April, 1919, in the following words : "I have said times without number that *Satyagraha* admits of no violence, no pillage, no incendiarism, and still in the name of *Satyagraha* we burnt down buildings, forcibly captured weapons, extorted money, stopped trains, cut off telegraph wires, killed innocent people and plundered shops and private houses. If deeds such as these could save me from the prison house or the scaffold, I should not like to be saved."[23]

From Ahmadabad Gandhi proceeded to Nadiad. As he saw the actual state of things there and received reports, it suddenly dawned upon him that he had committed a grave error in calling upon the people to launch a campaign of Civil Disobedience. He felt that a *Satyagrahi* must scrupulously obey all laws; for only then does the right accrue to him of the civil disobedience of certain laws in well-defined circumstances. No one had a right to adopt *Satyagraha* before he had thoroughly qualified himself for it, and Gandhi realized that his error lay in his failure to observe this necessary limitation. It was in this connection that Gandhi said that he was guilty of a 'Himalayan miscalculation'.[24]

As a result of these reflections, reproduced as far as possible in his own words, Gandhi suspended the Civil Disobedience and decided not to re-start it on a mass scale without creating a band of well-tried, pure-hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of *Satyagraha*, could explain them to the people, and by sleepless vigilance

keep them on the right path. Accordingly, he went to Bombay and raised a corps of *Satyagrahi* volunteers through the *Satyagraha Sabha*. But Gandhi found that people took little interest in the peaceful side of *Satyagraha*. The number of volunteers dwindled and even those who remained did not take a regular training.

There were many who were unhappy over Gandhi's decision to suspend *Satyagraha*. They felt that if all-round peace was regarded as a condition precedent to *Satyagraha*, mass-*Satyagraha* would be an impossibility. Gandhi, however, held the view that those who wanted to lead the people to *Satyagraha* ought to be able to keep them within the limited non-violence expected of them.

In the meantime events were moving fast in the Panjab. In order to properly assess the situation it is necessary to remember the part played by the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who had exasperated the whole Province by his cruel recruiting campaigns, his ruthless suppression of the people, and insults heaped upon the educated classes. He interned hundreds of local men with little or no cause. He gagged the vernacular press and prevented the nationalist papers published outside the Panjab from entering the Province. As already mentioned above, he was hated by the people for his arbitrary methods of collecting funds and forcible recruiting of men for the army. One of the devices adopted by him was to force "Lambardars ( land-owners ) to furnish recruits on the penalty of forfeiting their rights to the land."[25] All this caused so much popular resentment that during the special session of the Congress at Bombay (1918) delegates from the Panjab told their fellow-delegates how "they were living over a volcano, which any act of exceptional tyranny might cause to burst out ".[26]

This proved to be a prophetic utterance and the volcano burst out soon after the *hartal* of April 6. Within a week a considerable part of the Panjab was aflame and the authorities

put down the " rebellion " with such measures as no civilized Government in modern times has ever been known to take against its own subjects.

Fortunately for history, a thorough inquiry was made into the whole affair by two Committees, one official (Presided by Lord Hunter), and another appointed by the Congress, within a year of its occurrence. A perusal of these two Reports together with statements of reliable persons made at the time enable one to form a fairly accurate idea of the main trends of events. It is neither possible nor necessary to give a detailed account of even the most important incidents that took place in various localities. It will suffice to give a short account of the incidents at Lahore, Kasur and Gujranwala to serve as typical examples, and make a somewhat detailed reference to the events of Amritsar.

### i. Lahore.

The news of Gandhi's arrest created great excitement on April 10. All the shops and business places were immediately closed. About 200 or 300 students, while proceeding towards the Mall, were stopped by the Police near the High Court. They neither moved forward nor turned back. Thereupon Mr. Foyson, the District Magistrate ordered firing, and two volleys were fired. Two or three were killed and a few wounded. In the meanwhile another crowd was collected near the Lahari Gate. Pandit Rambhuj Datta requested the Magistrate to give him some time so that he might induce the men to disperse peacefully. Ten minutes' time was allowed and at the end of this period, people were about to disperse. Mr. Datta, reminded by the Magistrate that the time-limit had passed, asked him to wait for a few minutes as a vast crowd of ten to fifteen thousand would naturally take some time to disperse. Only two minutes were allowed, and after the expiry of this, even while the crowd, sitting on the road, stood up to disperse, fire was opened upon them,

bullets beside buckshots being used. A few died and many were injured.

On Friday, the 11th April, a meeting was held in the Badshahi mosque, and the *hartal* was continued. Next day, the 12th, another meeting was held in the same place. An Inspector of the C. I. D. remarked before the commencement of the meeting : "Is this mosque of God's house or Satan's" ? This provoked the people who beat him. Otherwise the meeting, attended by about 30,000 people, passed off smoothly. But when the meeting was over the people found that the mosque and its approaches were surrounded by the Military and the Police. It is said that a brickbat thrown by the crowd struck the horse of the Officer Commanding. Immediately nine shots were successively fired at Lala Khusiram, a student in the Sastri class and he fell dead. His dead body was taken to the cremation ground in a procession of 50,000. The exact number of the dead could not be ascertained.[27]

### ii. Gujranwala.

The trouble started over the killing of a calf and hanging it on a railway bridge. It was alleged that the Police did it by way of insulting the Hindus. On April 14 a big crowd surrounded a train, stoned it, and burnt two railway bridges including the one mentioned above. The crowd then set fire to the telegraph office, post-office, railway station, Dak Bungalow, the office of the Collector, a railway shed, a church and a school.[28]

### iii. Kasur.

In Kasur the violence of the crowd took a more serious turn. It is alleged that the people got excited by the conduct of the police and were highly provoked. In any case the crowd got entirely out of control on April 12, burnt the main post-office, Munsiff's office and a small

oil shed, did considerable damage to the Railway station signal and telegraph wires, and did other acts of rowdyism. They also attacked a train and beat two European soldiers to death.[29]

### iv. Amritsar

The *hartals* on March 30 and April 6 passed off smoothly, even though the people were highly provoked by the order served upon the two popular leaders, Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew, not to address public meetings. The huge procession of the *Ramnavami* festival also passed off smoothly on the 9th. The Deputy Commissioner said in his evidence : "As a rule they were very civil, every car in the procession stopped in front of me and the band played, God save the King."[30] The Congress Committee remarked : "We felt tempted to say that O'Dwyer invited violence from the people so that he could crush them." This seems to be justified by facts. On that very day, 9th April, O'Dwyer's Government issued orders for the deportation of Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew, and they were quietly taken from their homes on the 10th morning. At about midday the news spread in the city. *Hartal* was declared and a not very large crowd of demonstrators marched through the principal streets of the city, towards the Bungalow of the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar to plead for the release of the prisoners. There being a cattle and horse show at Amritsar in connection with the Vaisakhi fair, many people of the agriculturist class from outside the city attended it and they also joined the demonstration. On their way the crowd came to know of the forcible repatriation of Gandhi from the borders of the Panjab by the order of th : Government. This created great commotion, but nevertheless the crowd marched peacefully, and did not molest or take any notice of the Europeans whom it met on the way. But the crowd was checked at the Railway level-crossing, called the Hall Gate Bridge, and though the crowd was quite unarmed,

not having even 'sticks, or *lathis,*' firing was resorted to. "Several people were killed and wounded. The crowd then rushed back to the city, infuriated by the sight of their dead and wounded comrades on the ground and the action of the authorities, who had dealt in this manner with a demonstration which set out with peaceful intentions.

"Thereafter followed a series of brutal acts of violence on the part of the coarser elements in the mob, which had got entirely out of hand. Five Europeans were murdered and several buildings, including the telephone exchange, two banks, the Town Hall, and the Indian Christian Church, were attacked and fired, and, in some instances, destroyed. Three of those killed were officials of the National Bank and the Chartered Bank. A lady missionary doctor, Miss Sherwood, was set upon by the mob, struck with sticks and fists, and left unconscious in the street. She was subsequently rescued by some Indians, who took her into a house and cared for her until she was restored to her friends. Later, the crowd again attempted to pass the Hall Gate Bridge, and were fired upon, with twenty to thirty casualties. The telegraph wires were cut and two railway stations outside the city were attacked....

"The sequence of events is important because it shows, as admitted in the official Report, that all the acts of mob violence...followed the unnecessary and unreasonable firing on the crowd at the Hall Gate Bridge, and the killing and wounding of peaceful demonstrators."[31]

This considerably weakens, if not altogether demolishes, the Government theory that the mob violence of 10th April was the designed outcome of a conspiracy to subvert the Government.

Things seemed to have settled down on the 11th. A big funeral procession carrying the dead bodies of the victims of police firing passed off smoothly and no

untoward incident happened in course of the day. But things took a bad turn with the arrival of Brigadier General Dyer on the evening of the same day (11 April). He immediately took command of the troops in the city and behaved as if the city was under Martial Law, though it was not formally declared before 15th April. The official report admits that *de facto* Martial Law prevailed in Lahore since the arrival of Dyer.

Dyer began his regime on the 12th by indiscriminate arrests and the issue of a proclamation prohibiting all meetings and gatherings. But, as the Hunter Committee reports, the proclamation was not read in many parts of the city. This omission, deliberate or accidental, was very unfortunate as it was announced on the 12th evening that a public meeting would be held at Jallian-wala Bagh on the 13th at 4-30 P. M. Although Dyer was fully aware of it, he took no step to warn the people about its illegality, or prevent it being held by stationing troops at the entrance of the Bagh. But soon after the meeting had begun, Dyer arrived on the spot with armoured cars and troops. He stationed himself and his troops on a rising ground at the entrance of the Bagh, and, then, without issuing any warning ordered the troops to fire. The troops fired into the dense crowd for ten consecutive minutes till their ammunition was exhausted or nearly so.

The following vivid account given by Valentine Chirol, by no means a friend of India, is based on official evidence: "One cannot possibly realise the frightfulness of it until one has actually looked upon on the Jallianwala Bagh —once a garden, but in modern times a waste space frequently used for fairs and public meetings, about the size perhaps of Trafalgar Square, and closed in almost entirely by walls above which rise the backs of native houses facing into the congested streets of the city. I

entered by the same narrow lane by which General Dyer.........entered with about fifty rifles, I stood on the same rising ground on which he stood, when without a word of warning, he opened fire at about 100 yards' range upon a dense crowd, collected mainly in the lower and more distant part of the enclosure around a platform from which speeches were being delivered. The crowd was estimated by him at 6,000, by others at 10,000 and more, but practically unarmed, and all quite defenceless. The panic-stricken multitude broke at once, but for ten consecutive minutes he kept up a merciless fussilade, in all 1500 rounds, on that seething mass of humanity, caught like rats in a trap, vainly rushing for the few narrow exits or lying flat on the ground to escape the rain of bullets, which he personally directed to the points where the crowd was thickest. The "targets", to use his own word, were good, and then at the end of those ten minutes, having almost exhausted his ammunition, he marched his men off by the way they came. He had killed, according to the official figures, only wrung out of Government months later, 379, and he left about 1200 wounded on the ground, for whom, again to use his own word, he did not consider it his "job" to take the slightest thought."

Sir Valentine comments : "But for General Dyer's own statement before the Hunter Commission, one might have pleaded that, left to his own unbalanced judgement by the precipitate abdication of the civil authority, he simply 'saw red'....... But, on his own showing, he deliberately made up his mind while marching his men to Jallianwala, and would not have flinched from still greater slaughter if the narrowness of the approaches had not compelled him to leave his machine-guns behind. His purpose, he declared, was to strike terror into the whole of the Punjab".[32]

We also possess the account of Lala Girdhari Lal, the Deputy Chairman of the Panjab Chamber of Commerce who personally witnessed the whole incident from a house overlooking the Jallianwala Bagh, and was the first to go into the Bagh after the firing had ceased. He says : "I saw hundreds of persons killed on the spot. The worst part of the whole thing was that firing was directed towards the gates through which the people were running out. There were small outlets, 4 or 5 in all, and bullets actually rained over the people at all these gates, and......many got trampled under the feet of the rushing crowds and thus lost their lives. Blood was pouring in profusion. Even those who lay flat on the ground were shot. No arrangements were made by the authorities to look after the dead or wounded....... I think there must have been over 1,000 dead bodies in the garden then."[33]

As will be seen, there is a serious discrepancy between the above two accounts regarding the number of the dead. On this subject the Congress Inquiry Committee observes : "In the matter of the death roll, it is interesting to note that according to the Government's own showing, they did not commence investigating the figure before the 20th August, i. e., four months after the tragedy. Mr. Thompson then announced that not more than 290 had died. Now they have practically accepted the Seva Samiti's figures, viz., 500, which are based on actual tracing and represent the minimum. The exact figure will never be known, but after careful investigation, we consider that Lala Girdhari Lal's computation of 1,000 is by no means an exaggerated calculation."[34]

The most significant aspect of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy was the very frank statement of Dyer. He not only admitted all the gruesome facts but almost boasted of his achievement and sought to justify it. "To him it was a 'merciful act' to fire without warning on an inoffensive crowd because it might have made fun of him

if he had refrained from doing so. He admits that he could have dispersed it without firing but that would have been derogatory to his dignity as a defender of law and order. And so, in order to maintain his self-respect, he thought it his duty to 'fire and fire well' till his ammunition was exhausted and 2,000 persons lay dead or wounded. There ended his duty. It was none of his business, he tells us, to look after the dead and wounded. It was no one's business. The defenders of law and order had won a great victory, they had crushed the great rebellion. What more was needed ?"[35]

But Dyer does not stand alone. The Government of India and a section of the British people—men and women, women more than men,—both in India and Britain, endorsed his action and rewarded him for it. But there was at least one Britisher, C. F. Andrews, who described Dyer's act as "a cold and calculated massacre", and "an unspeakable disgrace, indefensible, unpardonable, inexcusable."[35a]

The cold-blooded massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in the annals of any civilized Government, took place before Martial Law was declared and the administration was still, at least nominally, in the hands of the Civil authority. Martial Law was proclaimed at Amritsar on the 15th April, 1919, and in five districts of the Panjab between 15th and 24th April. It was withdrawn on 11 June except on railway lands.

The facts elicited by the Hunter Committee from the officials concerned leave no doubt that there was hardly any justification for the introduction of Martial Law to control the situation.

As regards the continuance of the Martial Law even the Majority Report of the Hunter Committee contained the observation : "The wisdom of continuing Martial Law for the whole length of time it remained effective in the

Panjab is more open to objection than the original declaration."[36]

The regime of Martial Law was a veritable reign of terror characterized by acts of brutality and deliberate rascality unworthy of any civilized government or of officers claiming to belong to a civilized nation. Fortunately for history, even the facts which are not in dispute are sufficient to sustain this severe indictment.

Dyer, as mentioned above, did not take any step to look after the wounded at Jallianwala Bagh. For, he said, 'it was not his job, they might go to the hospital if they liked.' But on that very day (13th April) "he had issued a Curfew Order, that all persons must be indoors after 8 p. m., and would go abroad in the streets at the risk of being shot at sight. Is it surprising that the wounded lay in their agony, that the dead lay putrefying in the hot atmosphere of an Amritsar April night, that the vultures and jackals came to tear the flesh from the bodies of the innocent victims of this dreadful holocaust, while the anxious relatives of innocent victims remained terrified in their houses..... The Curfew Order in Amritsar was maintained for weeks, and was administered with the utmost rigour."

"Among General Dyer's inspirations was the cutting off of the water supply and the electric supply of the city." One of the most astounding inventions of Dyer's fertile brain was the "crawling order". "By his orders, for several days, everyone passing through the street in which Miss Sherwood, the lady doctor, was assualted was ordered to crawl with belly to the ground."

"Floggings were a common feature of the administration of Martial Law in Amritsar as in other areas. ...A public platform for whippings was erected near the fort, and a number of triangles for floggings were erected in various parts of the city."

"Finally, here are the figures of the cases dealt with by the Courts at Amritsar. On major charges 298 people were put before the Martial Law Commissions, who tried cases unfettered by the ordinary recognized rules of procedure or laws of evidence. Of these 218 were convicted; 51 were sentenced to death, 46 to transportation for life, 2 to imprisonment for ten years, 79 for seven years, 10 for five years, 13 for three years, and 11 for lesser periods." This does not take account of 50 persons convicted summarily by military officers, and 105 persons convicted under Martial Law by civil magistrates.[37]

But Amritsar did not stand alone and Dyer had a worthy colleague in Capt. Deveton at Kasur.[38]

Capt. Doveton confessed that some people were made to touch the ground with their foreheads by way of making them acknowledge authority. He heard of *Sadhus* (ascetics) being whitewashed. Ahmad Khan said that one or two persons were made to get down on all fours and draw lines with their noses. This was done by Doveton's orders. Some persons were lime-washed and made to stand in the sun. As many as 107 persens were kept in a public cage without any overhead covering, specially built for the purpose. These 107 suspects—not yet criminals in the eye of law—were exposed to the burning sun and were obliged to answer calls of nature just where they were. Prostitutes of the town were called to witness flogging. Students had done nothing but were excited. So six were selected at random and whipped. In some cases Doveton gave considerable number of lashes to schoolboys. Men were sentenced to skip twenty times without stopping. Many villages were raided and arrests made between midnight and four in the morning. "Flogging took place in public, and photographic records of these disgusting incidents are in existence, showing that the victims were stripped naked to the knees, and tied to telegraph poles

or triangles."[39]

A few specimens of the orders under Martial Law may be noted :

1. All shops must be opened by 2 A. M, tomorrow.

2. It shall be unlawful for more than two persons to walk abreast and no male persons shall carry a *lathi.*

3. Any officer may be authorised to enter any building and remove such number of electric lights and fans as ma'y be necessary for the use of the military.

It is a tedious task to narrate at length the whimsical orders passed under Martial Law inflicting severe physical pains and mental anguish upon the people. A few specimens may be given. At Lyallpur "whenever the inhabitants meet any Gazetted European Civil or Military officer, persons riding on animals or on wheeled conveyances will alight, persons carrying open and raised umbrellas shall lower them, and all persons shall salute or *salaam* with the hand. In Lahore, students had to walk about 19 miles a day in the hottest time of the year, and some of them fainted by the wayside. Col. Johnson thought it did them good, it kept them out of mischief."

The order of *dismounting* and *salaaming* (as at Lyallpur) was intended to "bring home to the people that they had new masters". People were whipped and fined for disobeying this order.

Colonel O' Brien, who was responsible for the above order, gave many other evidences of his malignant mentality. " He was responsible for the arrest of number of people, who were kept in gaol for as long as six weeks without being brought to trial. In one case a number of leading citizens were summarily arrested, put in a goods truck, where they were huddled together after being marched several miles in the burning sun, some of them half-clad, and sent by train to Lahore. They were refused permission to answer the calls of nature, and were

ep in the truck in these conditions for about forty-fou ours. Hindus and Muslims were chained together. Thi was regarded by the populace as a jibe at Hindu-Muslim unity. Two hundred persons were convicted by Summary Courts, and received sentences of whipping, or from one month to two years' imprisonment. The Commission convicted 149 people, of whom 22 were sentenced to death, 108 to transportation for life, and others to sentences varying from ten years downwards. Colonel O' Brien's final achievement was to rush a large batch of cases through in about twenty-four hours, when he heard that Martial Law was to terminate the next day. The people concerned were given little opportunity of defending themselves and cases fixed for some days ahead were rushed into the Court post-haste, so anxious was Colonel O' Brien that none should escape his justice by reason of the lapse of Martial Law."[40]

The Panjab was treated by the military as even worse than an enemy territory. The Lieutenant-Governor himself conceived the idea of sending aeroplanes to throw bombs upon the rioters even when a section of responsible Englishmen believed that the danger from the mob was at an end. Bombs were freely used even where there was no gathering of armed men. At Gujranwala there were promiscuous dropping of bombs and firing of altogether 255 rounds of machine guns, apparently at close quarters. O' Brien admitted that 'the crowd was fired on ( from aeroplanes ) wherever found'. Lt. Dodkins, R. A. F., machine-gunned twenty peaceful peasants working in the field. He dropped a bomb on another party in front of a house, simply because a man was addressing them. The mentality of these officers, who can only be regarded as degraded specimens of humanity of brutish nature, may be construed from the following report of Carberry's evidence: "Major Carberry, R. A. F., bombed a party of

people because he *thought* they were rioters. The crowd was running away and he fired to disperse them. As the crowd dispersed, he fired machine gun into the village itself. He could make no discrimination between the innocent and the guilty. He was at a height of 200 feet and could see perfectly what he was doing. His object was not accomplished by the dropping of bombs alone...... The firing was not intended to do damage alone. It was in the interests of the villagers themselves! By killing a few, he thought, he would prevent the people from collecting again. This had a moral effect......" After that he went over the city, dropping bombs, and fired at the people who were trying to get away. The official report speaks of 150 rounds. But Carberry says in his evidence that he followed up the bombs with "several hundred rounds of machine-gun fire on the town itself." The official estimate of the casualties by bombing and machine-gunning from aeroplane, is nine killed and sixteen wounded. Horniman observes:

" The public are asked to believe that this promiscuous dropping of bombs and the firing of altogether 255 rounds of a machine-gun, apparently at close quarters, into crowds of people, resulted in the killing of nine and wounding of only about sixteen people! Can anyone, who remembers the work of the German aeroplanes in England during the war, doubt that the popular assertion of many more casualties is well founded? The Report is transparently dishonest."[41]

As regards the student community, the following statistics about punishments to students at Lahore, apart from the indignities, harassments and indiscriminate floggings mentioned above, will convey some idea.

Expulsion—34

Rustication for one year—18

Detention for one year—47

Forfeiture of scholarship—27
Temporary forfeiture of scholarship—16
Forfeiture of half-fee concession—5
Refused re-admission—12

In conclusion it may be mentioned that Sir Edward Maclagan, who succeeded O' Dwyer, substantially reduced the penalties imposed by various commissions. "Out of 108 death sentences only 23 were maintained...... out of 265 sentences for transportation only 2 were maintained", when they were later revised by the Government. The figures of original punishments give some idea of the administration by martial law courts.[42] The gruesome tale of atrocities committed in the Panjab were summed up by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer in his presidential speech at the All India Moderate Conference, 1919.

Lala Lajpat Rai, in his Presidential Address at the Indian National Congress in Calcutta held on 4th September, 1920, has also given a vivid account of the outrages that were actually committed in the name of law and order. A few passages are quoted below.

"Raliyaram and Abdulla have said that they were forced not only to crawl on their bellies but while crawling were kicked by the soldiers with their boots and struck with the butt ends of their rifles. L. Kahan Chand, a blind man, told how even he was made to crawl and was kicked. Six boys were flogged in public, one of them, Sunder Singh, 'became senseless after the fourth stripe, but after some water was poured into his mouth by soldiers, he regained consciousness. Flogging was then resumed. He lost his consciousness for the second time, but the flogging never ceased till he was given 20 stripes."

'The invalid wife of Manohar Lal, Bar-at-Law, who was for some time Minto Professor at the University of Calcutta, and their children were dragged from their rooms, forced to take shelter in the servants' quarters

and the kitchen. He was kept under arrest for 28 days and then let off without a charge and without trial.'

"Lala Beli Ram Kapur of Hafizabad was arrested and locked up with 23 others in a room measuring 12 by 25, the same room having to be used by all of them for natural purposes also. They were kept under-trial prisoners up to the 6th June."

"Mr. Bosworth Smith went towards the women. He removed their veils and used abusive language. He called them 'flies, bitches, she-asses' and worse things. He said to them 'your skirts will be examined by the Police constables. When you were sleeping with your husbands why did you allow them to get up and go'. He also spat on them." Even worse treatments to women are referred to by him.[43]

For eight months the Government of India tried to draw a veil over the horrible atrocities perpetrated in the Panjab. But the news of the terrible events slowly percolated to other parts of India and a wave of horror and indignation swept the country from one end to the other. The great poet Rabindranath relinquished his Knighthood as a measure of protest and wrote a strong but dignified letter to the Viceroy, "giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen surprised into a dumb anguish of terror."

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, with indefatigable energy brought to light the most ugly facts about the reign of terror in the Panjab and framed 92 questions alleging specific instances of brutality for the Imperial Legislative Council. But these were disallowed by the Viceroy, evidently for the very good reason, that the almost incredible picture of monstrous cruelties which they unfolded faithfully reflected the reality. This is proved by the fact that the Government immediately introduced a Bill of Indemnity for protecting the civil and military officials in the Panjab from consequences of their action. The questions asked by Pandit Malaviya, however, sent

such a thrill of horror over the whole country, that the Viceroy announced the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry in his opening speech. The non-official members suggested the postponment of the Indemnity Bill in view of the appointment of the Committee of Inquiry—for it would be nothing short of a travesty to absolve from punishment, in advance, those very persons whose conduct was the subject of inquiry. But the Government of India proceeded with the Bill, and it was passed.

A Committee appointed by the All-India Congress Committee appointed a Sub-Committee of nine members 'to conduct an inquiry into the recent occurrences in the Panjab,'

Just before this Sub-Committee came into existence, the Viceroy announced that a Commission of Inqulry would be appointed to investigate the disturbances in the Panjab.

The Commission of Inquiry consisted of Lord Hunter (Chairman), Mr. Justice Rankin, Mr. Rice, Major-General Sir George Barrow, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Sultan Ahmad. Pandit Jagat Narain and Mr. Thomas Smith were later added and the Committee began its work on 31 October, 1919.

Not only in India but even in England fair-minded critics condemned the composition of the Hunter Committee, which contained representatives of the Indian military and civil services, but no nominee of the Indian representative bodies.[44]

In the meantime the Congress Committee had started its investigation. They thought it advantageous to co-operate with the Hunter Committee and accordingly requested them to :

1. Release the leaders, who were undergoing imprisonment, on parole or bail, for the period of inquiry only, in order to make a proper and fair investigation of the Panjab events.

2. Permit the Committee to lead evidence throughout and to cross-examine the witnesses of the other side.

3. Supply a list of official witnesses and their printed statements which will enable their counsel to cross-examine the witnesses properly.

Popular opinion througouht India backed these requests as very proper and reasonable in order to elicit the truth, but the Hunter Committee and the Panjab Government refused to accede to the requests. The Congress Sub-Committee thereupon refused to co-operate with the Hunter Committee.

Thus the Hunter Committee had mainly to rely on the official documents, sanctioning or conniving at the atrocities which formed the subject-matter of investigation.

The Congress Sub-Committee of Inquiry finally consisted of Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Fazl-ul-Ḥuq and Abbas Tyabji ; M. R. Jayakar replacing Motilal Nehru when the latter was elected President of the Congress. The members of this Committee visited the disturbed areas and took evidence of 1700 persons, the statements of about 600 of whom were incorporated in their Report. These witnesses were duly warned of the consequences of allegations they might make against the Government, but they voluntarily made the statements without being afraid of the oppressions they were likely to suffer at the hands of the Government.

The Congress Sub-Committee submitted a unanimous report on 26 March 1920. The main findings of the Congress Inquiry Committee are summarised below, as far as possible, in their own words :-

'We believe that mob excesses in Amritsar and elsewhere were wrong and deserving of condemnation. Evidence shows that Sir Michael O' Dwyer subjected the Panjab to the gravest provocation under which the people momentarily lost their self-control.

'The theory of rebellion or war or conspiracy to overthrow the Government completely broke down before the

Hunter Committee; there is no proof of any organisation outside the Panjab behind the so-called conspiracy. Martial Law was therefore unjustified, much more so was its prolongation for nearly two months. The measures taken under it were such as to disgrace any Government calling itself civilised. Nearly twelve hundred lives were lost, at least three thousand six hundred men were wounded, and some permanently disabled. The vengeance taken was out of all proportion to the wrong done by the people. The slow torture administered to survivors during the Martial Law period, we have sufficiently described... Jallianwala Bagh massacre was a calculated piece of inhumanity and unparrallel for its ferocity in the history of modern British administration.

'It is impossible to ignore or slur over the inaction, if not active participation, of the Central Government. The Viceroy never examined the peoples' case and ignored the telegrams and letters from individuals and public bodies. He endorsed the action of the Panjab Government without any inquiry. He kept back from the public and the Imperial Government the horrible tales of massacres and other atrocities, even those which have been admitted by official witnesses and must have been known to him.

'O'Dwyer, Dyer, Johnson, O'Brien, Bosworth Smith, Sri Ram Sud and Malik Sahib Khan have been guilty of such illegalities that they deserve to be impeached. But future purity will be sufficiently guaranteed by dismissing them.'

The Report of the Hunter Committee was issued on May 26, 1920.[45] It was not unanimous, the five European members signing the Majority Report and the three Indian Members, the Minority Report. The two Reports agreed upon the following points :-

(a) The *Satyagraha* movement was mainly responsible

for the outbreak.

(b) The police and the military were justified in firing upon the mob. As regards Jallianwala Bagh, the Majority held that Dyer's conduct was open to criticism in two respects, first, that he fired without warning ; and second, in that he continued firing too long. They thought Dyer committed a grave error of judgment, but could not be blamed for not attending the wounded, for no one was exposed to unnecessary suffering for want of medical attention. The Minority differed on this point and took a graver view of the whole incident, stigmatising Dyer's conduct as inhuman and un-British.

(c) Both commented strongly upon exclusion of lawyers from outside the Panjab, considered the sentences of flogging to be too numerous, and condemned the crawling order and the penalties imposed upon the students.

(d) Both exonerated the Government of India from all blame.

The main differences between the two were on the following points.

(a) The Majority regarded the outbreak as a rebellion. The Minority did not agree that the riots were in the nature of a rebellion or might have rapidly developed into one. The two consequently differed about the necessity or justification of Martial Law. The minority stated that Martial Law came into existence when the crisis was past, at a time when the situation afforded no justification for it, and declared that its imposition for punitive purposes was constitutionally unjustifiable, and that its continuance was wholly unnecessary. They took a more serious view of the orders and punishments under the Martial Law and strongly denounced the actions taken as unjustifiable and calculated to humiliate and to foment racial bitterness.

(b) The Majority held that the outbreak at Amritsar

was anti-Government at every stage, hostility to Government quickly merging into antipathy for Europeans as such. The Minority held that the anti-European sentiments developed subsequent to the military firing of April 10.

(c) While generally agreeing upon the justification of the methods adopted in dealing with riots in other places, the Minority objected to certain specific incidents and regarded as unjustifiable some of the unnecessary firing done at Chuharkhana and Sheikhupura.

(d) The Minority regarded the working of the Courts and methods of arrest highly objectionable while the Majority regarded the trials as lengthy, detailed and careful.

A few Englishmen condemned the action of the Government of India in the strongest terms. Mr. Hyndman wrote: "Our own atrocities stand almost on a level with the outrages committed by Germany in Belgium, France and Poland. Worst of all we bombed unarmed crowds from aeroplanes." This sentiment was echoed by Mrs. Annie Besant and undoubtedly represents the voice of humanity. England had sunk to the level of belligerent Germany before the bar of World opinion. The Government of Britain pronounced only a mild censure on Dyer and removed him from active service, but absolved O' Dwyer and Chelmsford from all guilt. But even this was carried in the House of Commons only by 232 to 131 votes. On the other hand, the House of Lords passed a resolution by 129 votes to 89, deploring the removal of Dyer from the army as unjust and establishing a dangerous precedent. What was worse still, Dyer was acclaimed a hero and public subscriptions were raised to present a purse to him.

In India, the Englishmen regarded Dyer as the saviour of the British Empire. The European Association strongly resented the decision of the House of Commons and "received hundreds of letters through their branches and from European men and women all over India protesting against failure to reinstate General Dyer." They issued an

appeal to support the fund for General Dyer opened by the *Morning Post* in London and organize a memorial of General Dyer. A collection was made by the English ladies in India, who started a Dyer Appreciation fund at Mussooree. Dyer was presented with a sword and a purse of £. 20,000. The Europeans of Lahore entertained Col. Johnson at a farewell dinner and lauded him as the "protector of the poor". He had no difficulty in securing a good commercial appointment in India.[46] O' Dwyer had telegraphed approval of Dyer's conduct at Jallianwala Bagh as soon as he came to know of it, and Lord Chelmsford did not take any action against him even when the deplorable massacre and outrages came to be fully known. As soon as the Hunter Committee was appointed, the Government of India protected the guilty officials by passing an Act of Indemnity.

The lesson of Jallianwala Bagh was nothing short of this that while some English officers had descended to a level far below that of humanity, the English people, by their active or passive support to this outrage on humanity had lost all moral claim and prestige to rule over India. It thus became the paramount duty of the Indians to avenge at any cost the wrongs and insults inflicted by those who were shorn of all human instincts, and animated by nothing better or higher than a naked brutal force. This lesson was deeply implanted in the heart of every Indian, particularly that of Gandhi, the greatest Indian of the day, and inspired him to launch a campaign against the British which ultimately led to their final expulsion from India.

For the time being, however, Gandhi's action appeared to be mysterious. He suspended the *Satyagraha* movement on April 18 in view of the mob-violence. On July 21, 1919, he issued a statement in which he said that on account of indications of goodwill on the part of the Government and advice from many of his friends, he would not resume

civil disobedience, as it was not his purpose to embarrass the Government. He called on the *Satyagrahis* to work for the constructive programme, viz. use of indigenous goods and unity between Hindus and Muslims.

## III. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT

### 1. The Reform Bill

Although the Montford Report was published on 8 July, 1918, the text of the Reform Bill was not issued till 18 June, 1919. The Bill had a very unfavourable reception in India from all shades of public opinion. In several important respects the scheme of reforms embodied in the Bill fell far short of what was recommended in the Report. It did not leave a vestige of fiscal autonomy with the Provincial Legislatures. The position of the ministers was made much worse, almost intolerable. Secondary and Higher Education as well as Industry—subjects to which all Indians attached the greatest importance—were made Reserved instead of Transferred subjects, as recommended in the original Report. The *Leader* of Allahabad, an organ of the Moderates, characterized the final scheme as sham and observed, "that in the present form and with all its safeguards and limitations, especially with regard to Government of India, the bill was not calculated to cause satisfaction, much less was it likely to arouse enthusiasm." The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta, an organ of the centre party, remarked "that the people in general were now utterly indifferent about the Bill. The two most essential things were protection of the liberty of subjects and industrial development, but the Bill made no provision for them."

One of the reasons for this sad state of things was the action of the Government of India, which whittled down the scheme in their final despatch to such an extent that the Indian member of the Viceroy's Council, Sir Sankaran

Nair felt compelled to record a strongly worded minute of dissent. The Indian National Congress sent a deputation to England in a last effort to improve the Bill. But it returned disappointed.

A few liberal-minded Englishmen also decried the Bill. In an article contributed to the *Justice* ( London ) H. M. Hyndman, after condemning in scathing language the barbarities in the Panjab—India's reward for war-service—, observes : "The Bill remedies no wrong, it stanches not a drop of the ruinous drain, it gives Indians no real power in their own country, it leaves the Central despotism, which is guilty of the crimes recited above, wholly untouched. It is a sham and a fraud, worthy of the men who have botched it up."

Reference should be made in this connection to the great change in the political views of Mrs. Annie Besant, recently the idol of the nationalists in India. In a public lecture under the joint auspices of the Home Rule Leagues, on June 10, 1918, she maintained that nothing short of the Congress-League system would satisfy India. Even as late as August 3, 1918, she said that the Montford Report "established the continuance of the 'machinery of Autocracy' in India, with shreds and patches of local freedom." But in course of a few months her views were radically changed. She had a good following and abundant influence at the Special Congress of Bombay ( September, 1918 ), but she became a back number at the Delhi Congress ( December, 1918 ). She incurred great unpopularity by supporting the Rowlatt Bill, and she sank very low in popular estimation when she wrote on April 18, 1919, that "when the mob begins to pelt them ( soldiers ) with brick-bats, it is more merciful to order the soldiers to fire a few volleys of buck-shot."[47] When the scheme of Reforms was being examined by the Joint Committee of the Parliament she not only fell in with the views of the Moderates but even went to the

length of opposing the attempts of the Congress Deputation in England to get the scheme improved by amendments in the House of Commons to the Government proposals.

In 1922 she hailed the reforms of 1919 as ushering freedom in India. Yet, curiously enough, two years later she was instrumental in introducing the 'Commonwealth of India Bill' in the House of Commons through the help of some Labour Members. What is more strange, she expressed a sanguine hope that the Bill would be passed and remove the few limitations that still curtailed the freedom and liberty of India. It is difficult to offer a rational explanation of all these, and no wonder that political India did not take the Bill seriously. As a matter of fact Mrs. Besant passed out of Indian politics after 1920. Even the Home Rule League, founded by her, refused to elect her President and chose Gandhi in her place. In spite of all these it should never be forgotten that Mrs. Besant was a dynamic force in Indian politics at a very critical juncture and rendered yeoman's service for the cause of national regeneration in India, both from political and cultural points of view. India can never forget the energy with which she worked to make the idea of Home Rule popular in a large part of India. She was the first President of the Indian National Congress to show by action that the Presidentship "was not a passing show or a three-day festivity," but its responsibility continued throughout the succeeding year. This is proved by her restless activity for the first five months of 1918.[48] Her contribution to the growth of Indian nationalism by ardent advocacy of the greatness of ancient Indian culture has already been noted above.

## 2. The New Constitution[49]

### A. Home Government

A few minor changes were made in the Home Government. The salary of the Secretary of State, instead of being

paid out of the revenues of India, was to be provided by the British Government. Some changes were made in the power of the Secretary of State and the composition of his Council.

B. The Government of India.

The Act set up a bicameral legislature, the two houses being called, respectively, the "Legislative Assembly" and the "Council of State." The Council of State consisted of 60 members, of whom 33 were elected and 27 were nominated by the Governor-General. The minimum number of members in the Legislative Assembly was fixed at 140, and it actually consisted of 145 members, of whom 103 were elected and the rest were nominated. Of the nominated members, 25 were officials and the rest non-officials. Of the 103 elected members, 51 were elected by the general constituencies, 32 by communal constituencies ( 30 by Muslims and 2 by Sikhs ), and 20 by special constituencies ( 7 by landholders, 9 by Europeans and 4 by Indian Commerce ).

The life of the Central Legislative Assembly was 3 years, and of the Council of State, 5 years ( the periods could be extended by the Governor-General ). The first Speaker of the Assembly was to be nominated by the Government, the subsequent Speakers being elected by the members of the Assembly.

The franchise of both the houses was restricted and differed in different Provinces. In the case of the Council of State the voters must have either an annual income of not less than Rs. 10,000, or paid land revenue of Rs. 750. As regards the qualifications of the voters for the Central Assembly, these were either the payment of municipal taxes amounting to not less than Rs.15 per annum, or occupation or ownership of a house of the rental value Rs. 180, or an annual income of not less than Rs. 2,000, or land revenue of Rs. 50 per annum. The total number of voters for the Council of State was about 17,364 and for the Central Legislative Assembly, about 909,874 in 1920.

The Central Legislature was, in theory, given very wide powers to make laws, but they were effectively limited by the discretionary powers vested in the Governor-General. The previous sanction of the Governor-General was required to introduce Bills concerning certain subjects. The Governor-General had also the power to prevent the consideration, at any stage, of a bill or a part of a bill in either chamber of the Central Legislature, if, in his opinion, it "affects the safety or tranquillity of British India, or any part thereof." The Governor-General was empowered to enact laws which he considered essential for the safety, tranquillity or interests of British India, if either chamber refused or failed to pass them. Every Act so passed required the assent of His Majesty. The Governor-General could make and promulgate Ordinances in cases of emergency,—these having the same forces of law as a law passed by the Indian Legislature, but remained in force only for six months. The assent of the Governor-General was essential for the enactment of a law by the Legislature. He had the power to return a Bill for reconsideration, give his assent, or reserve the Bill for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure on the same. The Crown had the power of disallowing any Act made by the Indian Legislature or the Governor-General.

The Budget was voted by the Legislative Assembly. But certain items were not subject to vote or discusssion, and any demand refused by the Assembly could be restored by the Governor-General, if he found it necessary for the discharge of his responsibilities. He could also authorize necessary expenditure in case of emergency.

### C. Provincial Government

The Act introduced a form of Government which is usually referred to as Dyarchy. As the changes in the Provincial Government were of a far-reaching character, and deliberately designed to train Indians to the working of responsible Government these may be considered in some detail.

The following main principles were laid down in the Act :

1. All the major Provinces such as Bengal, Madras, Bombay, U.P., Panjab, Bihar and Orissa, C.P. and Assam shall be ruled by a Governor. The administrative departments. were divided into two categories,—Reserved and Transferred. The list of Transferred Subjects ( given in detail in Schedule II to the Act ) includes the following :-

1) Local self-government ; 2 ) Medical administration, Public Health and Sanitation ; 3 ) Education ( other than European and Anglo-Indian Education, and Central Universities like Benaras Hindu University) ; 4) Agriculture ; 5 ) Veterinary Department ; 6) Co-operative Societies ; 7) Excise ; 8 ) Registration ; 9 ) Religious and Charitable Endowment ; 10 ) Development of Industries.

The Governor acting with Ministers shall administer the Transferred subjects, while the other departments shall be administered by the Governor in Council as before, though the minimum number of officials in the Executive Council was reduced from two to one.

2. There shall be a Legislative Council in every Governor's Province, which shall include (a) members of the Executive Council, (b) members nominated by the Governor, and (c) members elected in accordance with the Act.

The number of members varied in different provinces, and was specified in the First Schedule. Of the members of each Council not more than twenty per cent. shall be official members and at least seventy per cent. shall be elected members. Each Council shall normally continue for three years.

3. The entire budget shall be presented to the Council for sanction, but if the Council withholds its assent to any demand relating to a Reserved Subject the Governor shall have power to sanction the expenditure. The Governor shall also have power to sanction necessary expenditure, in case of

emergency without the sanction of the Council.

4. The Governor may assent to any Bill passed by the Legislative Council, withhold his assent, return the Bill or reserve it for the consideration of the Governor-General. If the Legislative Council refuse to pass a Bill relating to a Reserved Subject, in a form recommended by the Governor, it shall be deemed to have been passed if the Governor certify that the passage of the Bill is essential for the discharge of his responsibility. All Bills passed by the Legislative Council required the assent of the Governor and Governor-General.

5. The Ministers appointed by the Governor to administer Transferred Subjects shall hold office during his pleasure, provided that no Minister shall hold office for a longer period than six months unless he is or becomes an elected member of the Council.

The Governor shall be guided by the advice of his Ministers in relation to Transferred Subjects, but may, for sufficient cause, act otherwise than in accordance with that advice.

6. Separate constituencies for election to the Legislative Council were provided by the Rules for Muhammadans, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, non-Brahmins (in Madras), Sikhs (in the Panjab), Landholders, Commerce and Industry, Planting, Mining, Labour, and University,

It would thus appear that the Legislative Council had no control over the Reserved Subjects and the funds allotted for them, and its po ver over the Transferred Subjects was more nominal than real, as the Governor could always override its decision.

## IV. THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND INDIAN POLITICS

The reaction of the Government of India Act on Indian politics followed more or less the same lines as noted above

in connection with the publication of the Montford Report. The Moderates, though not wholly satisfied, stood for ungrudging and whole-hearted co-operation for working it as successfully as possible within the limited sphere. A strong section was inclined to reject it altogether. But Tilak, who dominated the Nationalist Party and the Congress, stuck to the middle way all along advocated by him. When the King Emperor issued an appeal to the Indian people for co-operation in working the Reforms, Tilak, then on his way to attend the Amritsar Congress, sent a telegram from the railway train assuring "Responsive Co-operation" on behalf of the people of India.

The Moderates held a Conference in Calcutta on 30 December, 1919. They welcorned the Reforms Act as 'a definite and substantial step towards the progressive realisation of Responsible Government, and appealed to all sections of the community, European and Indian, officials and non-cfficials, wholeheartedly to co-operate for the suceessful working of the Act.'

Within a few days of the passing of the Act The Indian National Congress held its annual session at Amritsar. C. R. Das moved the following resolution :-

"That this Congress reiterates its declaration of the last year that India is fit for full responsible Government and repudiates all assumptions and assertions to the contrary wherever made.

"That this Congress adheres to the resolutions passed at the Delhi Congress regarding the constitutional reforms and is of opinion that the Reform Act is inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing.

"That this Congress further urges that Parliament should take early steps to establish full Responsible Government in India in accordance with the principle of self-determination."

Then followed a battle royal regarding two crucial

points, namely, co-operation with the Government in working out the reforms and offering thanks to Montagu. It was on this occasion that Gandhi for the first time took a leading part in the discussions of the Congress. C. R. Das was in favour of rejecting the reforms, while Gandhi took the opposite view. Tilak was in favour of responsive co-operation. Gandhi's attitude is explained by the following passage in the *Young India* of 31st December, 1919: "The Reforms Act coupled with the ( Royal ) proclamation is an earnest intention of the British people to do justice to India and it ought to remove suspicion on that score...... Our duty therefore is not to subject the Reforms to carping criticism but to settle down quietly to work so as to make them a success." Even a die-hard Moderate could hardly improve upon these words to suit his views. The Congress had pronounced adverse judgments on the Reforms both at Bombay and Delhi in 1918, in no uncertain terms, and was prepared to repeat in Amritsar that the Reforms Act was inadequate, unsatisfactory, and disappointing. The fact that notwithstanding all this Gandhi's view was not only patiently heard, but got a fair degree of support, even under the shadow of the inhuman atrocities perpetrated upon that city only a few months ago, speaks a volume on the great hold that Gandhi had already effected, not only upon the masses but also upon the educated politically-minded classes in India, by his personality and saintly life, and the introduction of the new weapon of *Satyagraha* in Indian politics. In that assembly of veteran nationalist leaders who had distinguished themselves in various fields of life and had a long record of public service in India behind them, Gandhi, a comparatively new figure in the Congress, easily establi.hed his position as a leader of the first rank. The contest was a prolonged one and there was an apprehension of another split in the Congress.

But fortunately a compromise was arrived at. It was to the effect that the following addition should be made to the resolution moved by C. R. Das :

"This Congress trusts, that so far as may be possible they will work the reforms so as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government and this Congress offers its thanks to the Rt. Hon' ble Mr. E. S. Montagu for his labours in connection with Reforms."

C. R. Das, while accepting the compromise, made his attitude quite clear. He was not opposed to co-operation if it helps the early establishment of full Responsible Government; but 'he was not opposed to obstruction, plain, downright obstruction, when that helps to attain our political goal.' While commending the additional clause he reminded the members that his original three propositions 'remain just as they are with the word disappointing'.[50]

Thus ended the memorable discussion on the Reforms in the Congress at Amritsar. On the whole the final outcome was a triumph, neither of C. R. Das nor of Gandhi, but of the 'Responsive Co-operation' formulated by the great and shrewd statesman B. G. Tilak.

## V. THE PAN-ISLAMIC MOVEMENT

Reference has been made above[51] to the influence of Pan-Islamic sentiments upon the minds of Indian Muslims and how it reacted on Indian politics by bringing about an *entente* between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League by way of a Muslim protest against the hostile attitude of Britain towards Turkey and other Islamic States.

Shortly after the outbreak of War, when the Allies were loudly proclaiming their sympathy for smaller and weaker nations, Muhammad Ali published an article under the caption "Evacuate Egypt." In another article, "The

Choice of the Turks," he begged the Allies to win over Turkey by making good the losses which had been inflicted upon her, and was very outspoken about the record of British relations with Turkey. As a result, both the brothers were interned and their papers were suppressed.[52]

The Pan-Islamic movement gathered force at the end of the First World War. Turkey's entry into that war as an ally of Germany against Britain put the Indian Muslims into an awkward situation. Their natural sympathy with the Sultan of Turkey, as their Caliph or religious head, was in conflict with their loyalty to the British throne as Indian subjects. The British Government fully realized the difficulty of the Indian Muslims, and in order to win their sympathy and support during the war, gave assurances of sympathetic treatment of Turkey at the end of the War. The British Prime Minister, Lloyd Geoorge, publicly declared on January 5, 1918, that the Allies were "not fighting to deprive Turkey of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race.", and this view was endorsed by Woodrow Wilson, the President of the U. S. A., in his message to the Congress on January 8, 1918. These specific assurances and the generous policy and sentiments expressed by President Wilson and other leading statesmen of the Allied countries led the Indian Muslims to believe that whatever happened, the independence of Turkey and her territorial integrity, so far at least as her Asiatic dominions were concerned, would be maintained. But all these hopes were doomed to disappointment by the terms of the Armistice which concluded the War. Thrace was presented to Greece, and the Asiatic portions of the Turkish Empire passed under the control of England and France under the guise of Mandates. While Turkey was thus dispossessed of her

homelands, her ruler, the Sultan, was deprived of all real authority even in the remaining dominions, as he was placed completely under the control of a High Commission appointed by the Allied powers, who really ruled the country in his name.

The Muslims of India regarded the treatment of Turkey as a great betrayal on the part of the British and other Allies, and a storm of indignation broke out among them. They decided to force Britain to change her Turkish policy, and Gandhi held out before them the sovereign remedy of *Satyagraha.* This led to the Khilafat Agitation in 1920.

## CHAPTER II.

# THE KHILAFAT AGITATION

Early in 1920 the Indian Muslims started a vigorous agitation to bring pressure upon Britain to change her policy towards Turkey. The success of this movement, known as Khilafat movement, was assured by the large measure of sympathy and support which the Muslims received from Gandhi. As the active participation of Gandhi gave an altogether new turn to the movement, it is necessary to explain his view-point which has always remained an enigma to many. Even while Gandhi was in South Africa, he had come to realize that there was no genuine friendship or good feeling between the Hindus and the Muslims. He was deeply aggrieved and strongly felt the need of establishing cordial relations between the two communities. Immediately after his return to India he established contact with the two Ali Brothers, and carried on correspondence with Muhammad Ali who was then in jail. Gandhi felt that the Muslim demand about the Khilafat was just and he was bound to render all possible help to secure the due fulfilment of the pledge that the British Prime Minister had given to the Indian Muslims during the War. In the letter which Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy immediately after the War Conference at Delhi, he particularly stressed the Khilafat question. Henceforth Gandhi missed no opportunity of pressing upon the Government of India the need of a just settlement of the Khilafat question and the release of Ali Brothers. He even went to the length of placing the Khilafat problem on the same level of political importance as the Home Rule for India. In the concluding para of his letter to the Viceroy

referred to above, he wrote as follows : "In the most scrupulous regard for the rights of those ( Mohammedan ) States and for the Muslim sentiment as to their places of worship, and your just and timely treatment of India's claim to Home Rule lies the safety of the Empire." It need hardly cause any surprise, therefore, that when the All-India Khilafat Conference met at Delhi on November 23,1919, Gandhi was elected its President. The Conference asked the Mussalmans not to join the public celebrations for victory, and held out threats of boycott and non-co-operation if the British did not solve the problem of Turkey in a manner satisfactory to the Muslims. This decision was reaffirmed by the Muslim League in Calcutta.

The release of Ali Brothers from internment, after four years, on the eve of the session of the Indian National Congress at Amritsar towards the end of December, 1919, gave a great fillip to the Khilafat agitation. Gandhi had a soft corner in his heart for the Ali Brothers who were the most vigorous champions of the Khilafat cause, and they must have taken full advantage of it. The leading Congressmen and Khilafatists, assembled at Amritsar, discussed the whole question, and it was decided to organize the Khilafat work under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhiji . In other words, the Congress lent the full support of its power, prestige and organization to the cause of the Khilafat.

It was decided in an All-India Khilafat Conference, held at Amritsar immediately after the Congress session, to send a deputation to the Viceroy. This deputation of the Khilafat Conference was fairly representative of Hindus and Muslims and the Address which it presented to the Viceroy on January 19,1920, was signed by many leading Hindu political leaders, including Gandhi, Swami Shraddhananda, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya This Address pointed out that the Hindus and Muslims "now happily reunited and standing shoulder to shoulder will be

equally aggrieved if the just demands of the Muslims were not accepted". The Viceroy expressed sympathy and added that both he and the Secretary of State were equally convinced that "Muslim feeling in India must be taken into the most serious account in coming to a final decision". He frankly told the deputation : "The contention which you urge in your address that Turkey should preserve in full integrity the sovereignty and dominions which she possessed before the War is one which I fear we cannot reasonably hope will be recognised by the Allied Powers in Conference. ......She cannot expect any more than any other power which drew the sword in the cause of Germany wholly to escape the consequences of her action".[2]

The reply was regarded as disappointing, and the Khilafat League arranged to send deputations to England as well as to Hedjaj,Nezd, Syria, Yemen, Palestine and Mesopotamia. The Indian deputation was received by Mr. Fisher on behalf of the Secretary of State, on 2 March, 1920, and met the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, on 17 March, but without much success. The final decisions on Turkey were announced by a communique of the Government of India published on 15 May, 1920. Although Turkey retained Constantinople, there was almost a complete dismemberment of the Turkish empire.

Lloyd George's reply to the Khilafat deputation on March 17 deeply stirred the Khilafat sentiment in India, and 19th March was fixed as a day of national mourning—a day of fasting and prayer and *hartal*. In the meantime Gandhi had issued a Manifesto on March 10, embodying his ideas on the future course of action to be pursued by the Khilafatists if their demands were not granted. This Manifesto is historically important as it contains the first definite elaboration of Gandhi's doctrine of Non-violent Non-co-operation which was shortly to play a dominant role in Indian politics. He ruled out the violent method of warfare, open or secret,

"if only because it is impracticable". He then proceeds : "The power that an individual or a nation forswearing violence can generate, is a power that is irresistible...Non-co-operation is, therefore, the only remedy left open to us. It is the clearest remedy, as it is the most effective, when it is free from all violence. It becomes a duty when co-operation means degradation or humiliation, or an injury to one's cherished religious sentiment. England cannot expect a meek submission by *us* to an unjust usurpation of rights which *to Muslims* means a matter of life and death"3. It is no doubt a lofty sentiment, but it is pertinent to ask whether England's treatment of Turkey, even assuming that she was solely responsible for it, was a greater degradation and humiliation to India than England's treatment of the Indians during a century and a half, or even the recent atrocities in the Panjab. As to regarding the fate of Khilafat as a matter of life and death to the Muslims, events were soon to prove that it was a rhetoric or hyperbole and can hardly be regarded as a serious fact ; for in less than five years the Muslims of Turkey usurped the rights of the Caliph to a far greater degree than the British ever did, and not a leaf stirred in the whole Muslim world outside India. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to believe that the Muslims of India were the only true followers of the Prophet or the most genuine champions of the cause of Islam, it is difficult to understand or explain the weight they attached to the Khilafat question, save on the theory that it was a phase of that Pan-Islamic movement to which the Indian Muslims looked forward as the only guarantee against the influence of a Hindu majority with whom fate had linked them in India. But this aspect of the question certainly could not appeal to Gandhi, and it is therefore not easy to explain why Gandhi should have thought of treating the Khilafat question as more important than the larger issues of Indian politics.

But whatever might have been the impelling motive

of Gandhi he chose this as the occasion for hurling the most effective weapon in his armoury against the British. He therefore sketched in his Manifesto a rough outline of the course of the Non-co-operation movement, in the following words: "We may therefore begin at the top as well as the bottom. Those who are holding offices of honour or emoluments ought to give them up. Those who belong to the menial services under Government should do likewise. Non-co-operation does not apply to service under private individuals. I cannot approve of the threat of ostracism against those who do not adopt the remedy of Non-co-operation. It is a voluntary withdrawal alone that is a test of popular feeling and dissatisfaction. Advice to the soldiers to refuse to serve is premature. It is the last, not the first step. We should be entitled to take that step when the Viceroy, the Secretary of State and the Premier leave us. Moreover, every step withdrawing co-operation has to be taken with the greatest deliberation. We must proceed slowly so as to ensure retention of self-control under the fiercest heat'.[4]

Thus Gandhi was fully prepared to fight the British with his newly forged weapon to the bitterest end over the Khilafat issue. But ere long other issues were joined to the Khilafat, and the Non-co-operation movement, originally intended for undoing the wrongs inflicted upon the Khilafat, merged itself into a general political struggle, far outstripping its original limitations. That story will be told in another chapter.

Gandhi's attitude towards the Khilafat question was criticised even by his friends; he justified himself in the name of the Hindu-Muslim unity, and on grounds of expediency, as would be clear from his following utterance:

"The test of friendship is true assistance in adversity, and whatever we are, Hindus, Parsees, Christians or Jews, if we wish to live as one nation, surely, the interest of any of

us must be the interest of all......We talk of the Hindu-Mahomedan unity. It would be an empty phrase if the Hindus hold aloof from the Mahomedans when their vital interests are at stake."[5]

It is an admirable sentiment, and does honour to the heart of a saint like Gandhi. But its practical wisdom may justly be questioned. Gandhi failed to realize that the Pan-Islamic idea which inspired the Khilafat question cut at the very root of Indian nationality. If the real sympathy and "vital interest" of a large section of Indians were bound up with a State and society which lay far outside the boundaries of India and had no political connection with it, they could never form a true unit of the Indian nation. Howsoever opinions might differ on the basic requirements of nationality it is generally agreed that different groups of people cannot constitute a nation unless they have common sympathy, agreement, and interest to such an extent as does not subsist between any of them and any external group. If a hundred million of Muslims are more vitally interested in the fate of Turkey and other Muslim States outside India than they are in the fate of India, they can hardly be regarded as a unit of Indian nation. By his own admission that the Khilafat question was a vital one for Indian Muslims, Gandhi himself admitted in a way that they formed a separate nation ; they were *in* India, but not *of* India.

That 'expediency' had also a share in the formulation of Gandhi's views is fully proved by his oft-quoted statement that such an opportunity of winning over the Muslims and forging the unity of Indian people to fight the British would not come in a hundred years. It is really this feeling that was uppermost in the minds of the Hindu leaders. But they did not realize the true significance of the Khilafat movement and the danger to Indian nationality lurking behind it.

The view taken above of the real nature of the Khilafat movement and the motives lying behind it may appear

strange to many. It is necessary, therefore, to quote the views of some eminent Muslims in support of it. The historian I.H. Qureshi admits that the claim of the Sultan of Turkey as the supreme religious authority of the Muslim world had no practical significance outside the Ottoman Empire. Then he adds : "But now that the Indian Muslims had lost their own liberty, they had reason to feel a strong emotional attachment to a Caliph whom they could claim as their own sovereign, even though only in a nominal and religious sense. Indeed, before the first World War, prayers for the Turkish Sultan had already come to be included in the Friday *Khutbah* ( sermon ) in the mosques of India".[6]

But the leader of the Khilafat movement, Muhammad Ali himself, furnishes more valuable testimony. In his unregenerate days, while he was still a nationalist and a broad-minded politician, he openly scoffed at the idea that Indian Muslims should be affected by events in the Muslim world outside India or form a pact with the Hindus as a means of bringing pressure against the British—exactly the two features which marked the Khilafat movement. In a very thoughtful article entitled "The Communal Patriot" which he wrote in his paper , the *Comrade*, he observes :

"People talk sometimes of the need of the Muslims joining hands with the Hindus, because some incidents in comtemporary history have not been exactly to their liking... Soft-headed and some self-advertising folk have gone about proclaiming that the Muslims should join the Congress becase the Government had revoked the Partition of Bengal, because Persia and Turkey are in trouble. We were simply amused at this irresponsible fatuity. But when a responsible body like the London Branch of the All-India Muslim League talks of closer co-operation between the Hindus and Muslims because the Muslims of Tripoli and Persia have been the victims of European aggressions, we realize for the first time that even sane and level-headed men can run off at a tangent and

confuse the issues. What has the Muslim situation abroad to do with the conditions of the Indian Muslims ?... Have the questions that really divide the two communities lost their force and meaning ? If not, then the problem remains exactly where it was at any time in recent Indian history. Board of arbitration, peace syndicates and solemn pacts about cows cannot solve it any more than we can by a spell of occult words control the winds and the tides. The communal sentiment and temper must change and interests must grow identical before the Hindus and the Muslims can be welded into a united nationality".[7] These words are significant in more than one way. It shows that Muhammad Ali was convinced that there were questions that divided the two communities, and so long as they were not solved, a pact such as was made during the Khilafat agitation could not solve the Hindu-Muslim problem. Further, it shows how easily he could change his views deliberately formed on the basis of facts which remained unaltered. For his pact with the Hindu. leaders during the Khilafat movement is a direct negation of all that he wrote in his article in the *Comrade*. As a matter of fact there are good grounds to believe that the respect and reverence of the Muslim masses in India for their Caliph, the Sultan of Turkey, were deliberately utilized by their leaders to rally them to the cause of the Pan-Islamic movement, and by forging unity among themselves on this basis, to make the Muslims a great political power in India. As noted above, the Khilafat Conference at Bombay arranged to send delegations of Indian Muslims to all the Muslim countries outside India.

The Pan-Islamic sentiment behind the Khilafat movement was also indicated by the mass migration of Muslims from India to Afghanistan. This planned movement, known as *Hijrat*, started in Sindh and gradually spread to N.W.F.P. It was estimated that in the month of August, 1920, nearly 18,000 people were on their way to Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the Afghan Government was inspired more by national than by Pan-Islamic sentiment, and forbade the admission of the Indian *Muhajirins* to Afghanistan. Thus the *Hijrat* had to be given up after a great deal of loss and sufferings, including a clash between the emigrants and the military at Kacha Garhi.[8]

The Hindu leaders failed to realize that the Khilafat agitation was really inspired by the Pan-Islamic movement, and the policy of Hindu-Muslim *entente* was merely an ingenious device on the part of the Muslim leaders to secure help against British imperialism, then regarded as the greatest enemy of Islam. There was no reason to suppose, as subsequent events clearly proved, that the Muslim leaders were inspired by a genuine desire to make up their differences with the Hindus in order to form an Indian nation.

The Hindu leaders fell into the trap. Too eager to arrive at a political settlement with the Muslims at any cost, they jumped at what they conceived to be a unique opportunity for achieving that end,—an oppotunity which, as Gandhi put it, might not occur in a hundred years' time. Wish being the father of thought, they interpreted the Muslim attitude in their own way, without looking back at the antecedents of the Muslim community in general, and of the Ali Brothers in particular, so far as Pan-Islamism was concerned.

The Ali Brothers "were active members of the Muslim League advocating Muhammadan interests in opposition to the Hindus in the old days of the Bengal Partition agitation. In their public speeches they emphasized the identity of the interests of the Indian Muhammadans with the interests of the Muhammadans elsewhere in Tripoli and Algeria in preference to those of the Hindus."[9] They openly said that they were Muslims first and Indians afterwards. As a corollary to this, reference may be made to their attitude towards a Muslim invader of India. Wild rumours were afloat at the time that the Amir of Afghanistan was going to invade India

— according to some,at the invitation of the Indian Muslims.[9a] Whatever might be the value of the report its reaction on Muhammad Ali is most revealing : He said that 'if the Afghans invaded India to wage a holy war, the Indian Muhammadans are not only bound to join them but also to fight the Hindus if they refuse to co-operate with them.'[10]

It is a sad commentary on the wisdom of the Congress leaders that they allowed even such statements of the acknowledged leaders of the Khilafat movement to go unchallenged, nay ignored, and Gandhi's 'dear brother' Muhammad Ali was allowed to be a determining factor in Indian politics for a long period. The repeated manifestations of Pan-Islamic and anti-national sentiment, even clear assertions that they were Muslims first and everything else afterwards, both in domestic and foreign policy, left the Hindu leaders unmoved, and did not disturb their dream of founding Indian nationality on the basis of Hindu-Muslim unity.[11]

But the attitude of Gandhi in this respect was much worse, as he lent the whole weight of his magnetic personality towards making a common cause with the Khilafat movement and carrying the Hindu leaders with him. His statements in justification of his conduct[12] are often of a mystic character. Thus he wrote in the *Young India* on 20 October, 1921 :

"I claim that with us both the Khilafat is the central fact, with Maulana Muhammad Ali because it is his religion, with me because, in laying down my life for the Khilafat, I ensure the safety of the cow, that is my religion, from the Mussalman knife.'[13]

Every Indian, not blinded by devotion to Gandhi, must rub his eyes with wonder at this statement. There were leaders who fully understood that the repercussion of the Khilafat movement on Indian politics would be just the opposite of what Gandhi believed, Thus C. R. Das wrote to Lala Lajpat Rai : "I am not afraid of

seven crores (of Muslims) in Hindustan, but I think the seven crores of Hindustan plus the armed hosts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Turkey will be irresistible."[14] But though Das fully realized that 'the Khilafat movement brought this menace into staggering prominence,' he did not raise his voice against it. It seems, as Jawaharlal Nehru admitted,[15] that Gandhi had the power to cast a spell over those around him and make them acquiesce in his policy without being convinced of its wisdom, and sometimes even though they regarded it as against the best interests of the country. In any case, Gandhi must bear the chief share of the blame for the Hindu support to the Khilafat movement, for it was he who led the way and it was his magnetic influence which drew other Hindu leaders towards it. Howsoever Gandhi might justify himself there can be no question that the Pan-Islamic movement, based on the extra-territorial allegiance of the Indian Muslims, cut at the very root of the nascent Indian nationalism. Any support, direct or indirect, to the Khilafat movement, not to speak of active participation as its leader, must therefore be regarded as anti-national. The conduct of Gandhi, a great political leader, in assuming the leadership of the Khilafat movement, was certainly very reprehensible, and judged in this context, the epithet 'Father of the Indian nation,' given him by his devotees, seems to be singulary inappropriate. How far Gandhi had forsaken the ideal of Indian nationalism may be judged from his observation on the report of Afghan invasion of India mentioned above. While his 'dear brother' Muhammad Ali declared that he would join the Afghans and force the Hindus to do the same, Gandhi was prepared to help this ignoble cause of making India a *Dar-ul-Islam* (country of the Muslims) in an indirect manner. He wrote: "I would, in a sense, certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan if he wage war

against the British Government. That is to say, I would openly tell my countrymen that it would be a crime to help a Government, which had lost the confidence of the nation to remain in power."[16] It would be an insult to the intelligence of man to take notice of the sophistry by which the blind followers or devotees of Gandhi have sought to defend him. An ordinary layman, whose eyes are not blurred by the dazzling mystic halo of Gandhi, can only deduce from these lines that Gandhi was ready to cast aside his patriotism and nationalism, and even sacrifice India, in order to placate the Muslims. It is gratifying to note that there were at least two Indians who had the courage to denounce in public, in the most unequivocal manner, the abject surrender of Gandhi to the Muslims. One was Sir Sankaran Nair,[17] and the other was Dr. Ambedkar.[18] The devotees of Gandhi also indirectly admit that his conduct cannot be approved, nor his action justified, in every case, if judged by normal process of reasoning such as one applies to any other person. Thus Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who was once Gandhi's chosen candidate for the Presidentship of the Congress, and was, later, a Governor in free India, claims that "Gandhi's plans have all along been revealed to him by his own instinct, not evolved by the cold, calculating logic of the mind. His inner voice is his mentor and monitor, his friend, philosopher and guide...He saw things as if by a flash and framed his conduct by impulse. To the righteous man, these two are the supreme guides of life, not reason or intellect."[19] All this may be true. But history, as the term is generally understood, cannot dispense with logic and reasoning and accept, instead, mystic instinct or impulse as the sole criterion of a political leader's conduct and action.

## CHAPTER III

# THE NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT.

### I. INAUGURATION OF THE MOVEMENT BY THE KHILAFATISTS.

Reference has been made above[1] to the issue of a manifesto on March 10, 1920, by Gandhi, recommending Non-co-operation (NCO) as the only course to be pursued by the Khilafatists if their demands were not granted. In the Delhi Khilafat meeting held on 15 March, 1923, a committee consisting of Gandhi, Lajpat Rai, Ajmal Khan, Azad and Shaukat Ali was formed to examine Gandhi's scheme of NCO. Gandhi's ideas were adopted by the Khilafat Conference which met at Madras on April 17, 1920. It laid down the following four stages in the progressive scheme of Non-co-operation ; (I) Renunciation of honorary posts, titles and membership of Councils, (2) giving up of posts under Government, (3) giving up of appointments in the police and military forces, (4) refusal to pay taxes.[2]

On 12th May an urgent meeting of the All-India Khilafat Committee was hastily called at Bombay to deliberate upon the NCO movement. Gandhi attended the meeting and again emphasized that the only course now left open to the Muslims was to adopt NCO. Its success, he said, depended on their firmness and courage. He assured Hindu support but said that the Muslims must take the lead. As for himself, he was willing to sacrifice himself, his wife and children, for the sacred cause. It is said that he was able to persuade Shaukat

Ali and his followers to give non-violent NCO a full and fair trial. As a result of this meeting a Sub-Committee consisting of Messrs. Chotani, Gandhi, Azad, Muhammad Ali. Shaukat Ali, and Ahmad Siddiq Khatre was appointed to organize the NCO movement.

On May 15, 1920, the Government of India published a communique announcing the peace terms offered to Turkey, as has already been mentioned above. Two days later, Gandhi issued a statement declaring that the terms offered were a staggering blow to Indian Muslims and urged them never to lose self-control nor give way to despair. "There is no sacred character about the peace terms," said he, "they are capable of being revised...... I am convinced that the non-co-operation is the only effective remedy both for avoiding violence and healing the wound inflicted on Muhammadans of India."

The publication of the peace terms to be offered to Turkey (May 15, 1920) created a feeling of dismay and gave a rude shock to the Muslims. The Central Khilafat Committee organized a huge public meeting at Bombay on 28 May which adopted Non-co-operation as the only practical line of action. Many notable Muslims accordingly renounced and returned their titles and abjured all co-operation with the Government.

On the same day[2a] was published the Report of the Hunter Committee together with the decision of the Government of India, which caused a profound and painful impression throughout India. Thus both the communities were stirred to action.

Events now marched at railway speed. and it is not easy to follow their exact course. A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) was held at Banaras on 30 May, 1920. It passed a large number of resolutions of which the more important are summarised below :

1. The AICC records its indignant protest against the general policy and attitude of the Secretary of State for India on the Panjab affairs.

2. The AICC records profound disappointment and dissatisfaction in the Hunter Committee Majority's Report, completely dissents from the principal findings and recommendations of the Report, and regards its inquiry as incomplete, one-sided, and unsatisfactory, by reason of shutting out the evidence of the very Panjab leaders whose acts the Committee was called upon to investigate.

"The AICC deplores that the Hunter Committee Majority's report should be tainted with racial bias and a desire to overlook and justify the manifest, proved and grave acts of commission and omission of the Indian and Panjab Governments and many acts of inhumanity perpetrated by the officers during the Martial Law regime, and that the report should thus accentuate the tendency to count Indian life and honour as of little consequence. The AICC unhesitatingly rejects the Majority's conclusion that the Panjab was in a state of open rebellion and accepts the conclusion of the Minority and the Government of India's Indian member to the contrary."

3. A petition be presented to Parliament to take immediate steps to institute proceedings by way of impeachment or otherwise to bring Sir Michael O'Dwyer to justice and to place General Dyer, Col. Johnson, Col. O'Brien and Bosworth Smith before His Majesty's Court of Justice in Great Britain for the cruelties committed in April-May, 1919, in Amritsar, Gujranwala, Kasur and other places in the Panjab. That Rai Saheb Sri Ram Sud and Malik Khan be dismissed and prosecuted.

4. That the Rowlatt Act be repealed.

5. That the Viceroy be recalled.

6. The AICC is emphatically of opinion that the peace terms offered to Turkey constitute a flagrant violence to the

solemn pledges of His Majesty's Government and is in complete disregard of the principle of national self-determination accepted by the Allied Powers and of Muslim religious sentiment in India. The AICC strongly urges that in the interest of peace and contentment in India the Turkish Treaty terms be revised.3

That the above resolutions realiy reflected the prevailing sentiment in India is proved by the fact that the Moderate leaders, assembled in a meeting of the Council of the National Liberal Federation on June 12, passed resolutions generally endorsing the views of the AICC.

They urged for suitable punishment of all guilty officers, civil or military ; recorded emphatic protest against the high encomium bestowed upon Sir Michael O'Dwyer both by the Government of India and His Majesty's Government, and recommended his removal from office ; regretted that His Majesty's Government have ignored altogether the responsibility of the Viceroy who, instead of examining the situation on the spot and exercising the much-needed control over the Panjab Government, gave it virtually a free hand ; recorded appreciation of the Minority Report ( of the Hunter Committee ) and urged that His Majesty's Government should make a genuine effort to obtain revision of the peace terms offered to Turkey. At the same time they strongly disapproved of the Non-co-operation movement which, without doing any good to Turkey, is certain to do great harm to the peaceful progress of India.4

The All-India. Congress Committee which met at Banaras on 30 May, 1920, did not endorse the NCO movement of Gandhi and Khilafat Committee, and passed the following resolution :

"That in view of the general situation in India with reference to Indian public feeling on Turkish peace terms, His Majesty's Government's action with regard to the

Panjab atrocities, and the policy pursued by the Government of India in giving effect to the reform scheme through the proposed draft rules and regulations, a special session of the Congress be convened at Calcutta as early as possible, not later than the 15th September, to consider the adoption of the policy of Non-co-operation or any other suitable course of action".

It is stated in the official history of the Congress in its account of this A. I. C. C. meeting held at Banaras that "although Lokamanya Tilak passed Banaras at the time, he did not attend the Banaras meeting, for his heart was not wholly in the Khilafat agitation".[5] On the other hand, according to Ansari, Tilak supported the Khilafat resolution in the meeting, but refused to attend the Hindu-Muslim Conference held almost immediately afterwards at Allahabad.[6] The exact nature of this Conference, held on June 2, is also not easy to determine. According to the Congress version it was a meeting of the leaders of all parties summoned by Gandhi which decided upon the policy of Non-co-operation and appointed a committee to draw up the programme.[7] But this does not appear to be quite correct. In view of its great historic importance the point deserves careful consideration. The account of this meeting and the events following it, as given in the *Indian Annual Register*, may be summed up as follows :

A meeting of the Hindus and Muslims was held at Allahabad under the auspices of the Central Khilafat Committee on June 1 and 2 to consider the serious situation created by the Allied peace terms offered to Turkey. Among the Hindu leaders who attended the meeting were Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, B. C. Pal, Malaviya, Satyamurti, Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Chintamani. An informal meeting was held on the morning of June 1, and the main Conference was held at 9 P.M. The Muslim leaders appealed to the Hindus to

co-operate with them and support Non-co-operation. Several Hindu leaders spoke expressing sympathy with the Muslim claim, but differed as to the remedy suggested. Some expressed doubt of the success of Non-co-operation ; others welcomed it on principle, but not at that moment. Mrs. Besant strongly opposed it.

On June 2, the Conference met in the morning when the Muslims from various Provinces explained how far they were prepared to take up Non-co-operation. The same night, again, a meeting was held when only members took part in the discussion and voted, but delegates and visitors attended. Gandhi, in a solemn speech, said he knew full well that the Muslims realized that Non-co-operation was the only remedy now left to them. He was prepared to co-operate with them and suggested that a committee, consisting of members prepared to remain with him, with full powers, be appointed to work out the scheme and that its decision be binding on all people. This was agreed to and the following resolution was passed by the Central Khilafat Committee : "This meeting reaffirms the movement of Non-co-operation in accordance with the four stages already approved by the Central Khilafat Committee and appoints a sub-committee consisting of the following gentlemen with power to add to their number to give practical effect to the movement without further delay." The gentlemen named were Gandhi and six Muslim leaders. The meeting also resolved that the *Swadeshi* movement should be undertaken in right earnest and appointed a Sub-Committee to work out a scheme.

It is thus quite clear that the decision was made by the Khilafat committee and not by a conference of the leaders of all parties as stated in the official history of the Congress.

In pursuance of the decision arrived at this meeting of the Central Khilafat Committee, a letter signed by about 90 Muslim leaders from various parts of India was sent to the Viceroy which, *inter alia*, stated : "If, unfortunately, Your

Excellency will not adopt our humble suggestion, we shall be obliged as from the first August next, to withdraw co-operation from the Government and to ask our co-religionists and brethren to do likewise." Gandhi also wrote a letter to the Viceroy explaining 'his connection with, and his conduct in, the Khilafat question.' Both these letters were made public in the last week of June.[8]

In the light of later events, the decision of the Khilafatists in the Allahabad meeting must be regarded as a momentous one which profoundly influenced the course of events in Indian history. But if we can trust the memory of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, it would appear that the Muslim members who adopted the resolution of Non-co-operation had really neither courage nor enthusiasm for it, and were merely goaded to this decision by Gandhi's spirited address. Referring to it Nehru writes : "I remember the meeting because it thoroughly disappointed me. Shaukat Ali, of course, was full of enthusiasm ; but almost all the others looked thoroughly unhappy and uncomfortable. They did not have the courage to disagree, and yet they obviously had no intention of doing anything rash. Were these the people to lead a revolutionary movement, I thought, and to challenge the British Empire ? Gandhiji addressed them, and after hearing him they looked even more frightened than before. He spoke well in his best dictatorial vein......This is going to be a great struggle, he said, with a very powerful adversary......When war is declared martial law prevails, and in our non-violent struggle there will also have to be dictatorship and martial law on our side if we are to win......Something to this effect he said, and these military analogies and the unyielding earnestness of the man made the flesh of most of his hearers creep. But Shaukat Ali was there to keep the waverers up to the mark ; and, when the time for voting came, the great majority of them quietly and shamefacedly voted for the proposition—for war !

"As we were coming home from the meeting, I asked

Gandhiji if this was the way to start a great struggle. I had expected enthusiasm, spirited language, and a flashing of eyes ; instead we saw a very tame gathering of timid, middle-aged folk. And yet these people, such was the pressure of mass opinion, voted for the struggle."[9]

In July 1920, the Non-co-operation Committee, appointed by the Khilafat Committee on June 2, as mentioned above, issued a manifesto outlining the programme of the demonstration to be held on August 1 in the following words :

(1). The Committee advise full *hartal* on the first of August. Mill-hands, however, are requested not to abstain from work, unless they receive permission from their employers, nor should all those abstain who are required for absolutely necessary day-to-day work, viz. hospital men, sanitary men and dock labourers.

(2). The day should be devoted to prayer. All those, who can, should fast for the day.

(3). Meetings should be held all over the country, not excluding the smallest village, at which the following resolution should be adopted, with or without speeches, and forwarded to the Government. (The text of the resolution follows. It requests the Imperial Government to revise the peace terms offered to Turkey).

A note was added to the effect that there should be no defiance of any Government order and "no meetings should be held where there is any written prohibition."

An appeal was made for the surrender of titles and honorary posts on that day and the Committee sought the co-operation of the Hindus and other non-Muslim communities in making the inauguration of Non-cō-operation a complete success.

The Committee issued further directions for the demonstrations on the first of August. 'There should be no procession and no pressure against anyone refusing to

close shop. Special effort should be made and continued to secure surrender of titles and honorary posts, and parents are requested to withdraw their children from schools recognized by, or under control of Government. Lawyers are requested to suspend practice............Agitation for securing complete boycott of Councils should be continued unabated. Finally the Committee expects Muslims to lead as well in preserving peace and order as in sacrifice, and we feel sure that our Hindu brethren will not fail to respond and join the Muslims.'[10]

The Central Khilafat Committee organized a general all-India *hartal* on 1 August, 1920, under the guidance of Gandhi. Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy and returned all the war medals which were awarded to him by the British for his war services. "I venture to return these medals, in pursuance of the scheme of Non-co-operation inaugurated today *in connection with Khilafat movement*. Valuable as these honours have been to me", wrote he, "I cannot wear them with an easy conscience so long as my Mussalman countrymen have to labour under wrong done to their religious sentiment."[10a]

These words, and the whole history sketched above, leave no doubt that the action of Gandhi in launching Non-co-operation on 1 August, 1920, was the direct outcome of the Khilafat movement. A somewhat different interpretation is given of his action on account of his reference to the Panjab incidents in the same letter, in the following words : "The attitude of the Imperial and Your Excellency's Government on the Panjab question has given me additional cause for grave dissatisfaction. ...I therefore respectfully ask Your Excellency to summon a conference of recognised leaders of people and in consultation with them find a way that would placate Mussalmans and do reparation to unhappy Panjab". It is obvious that the Panjab incident was at best a secondary issue ; at a still later date, at the suggestion of

Vijayaraghavachari, endorsed by Motilal Nehru, Gandhi added a third issue, viz. independence of India, as the ground of Non-co-operation movement.[11] In view of the whole history of the Khilafat movement sketched above, and the first suggestion of Non-co-operation by Gandhi as far back as November, 1919,[11a] there seems to be no doubt whatsoever that when he launched the Non-co-operation movement on August 1, 1920, the Khilafat wrongs were the single issue which *determined* his action ; the Panjab atrocities and winning of *Swaraj* were subordinate issues which were gradually tacked on to the main issue of the Khilafat, at a later date, and as an afterthought.[11b]

It is somewhat singular that both the official history of the Congress as well as the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee appointed by the Congress in 1922 evade this main point and consequently give a version of the genesis of Non-co-operation movement which is very misleading, to say the least of it. After mentioning the elaboration of Non-co-operation programme by the Madras Khilafat Conference on April 17, 1920, the Report of the Enquiry Committee continues :

"Although at this stage the movement of Non-co-operation was concerned mainly with the Khilafat question, Mahatma Gandhi resolved to refer the question to a Conference of leaders of all parties which met at Allahabad on the 2nd of June 1920. At this Conference the policy of Non-co-operation was decided upon and a committee was appointed consisting of Mahatma Gandhi and some of the Muslim leaders to draw up the programme. The Committee published the programme in July and it was in the programme that the boycott of schools and colleges and of law courts first figured." [12]

The Report then, somewhat abruptly, turns to the Special session of the Congress in Calcutta held in September, 1920.

As noted above,[13] the course of events in Allahabad is described somewhat differently by others. As a further specimen we may quote the following : "The Hindu-Muslim Conference, which met at Allahabad on June 1, dispersed without coming to any definite conclusions. The Khilafat Committee, meeting on June 9, reaffirmed the principle of Non-co-operation and appointed a Committee to lay down a detailed programme. It was also decided to start the movement under Gandhiji's guidance, after giving a month's notice to the Viceroy. Gandhi addressed an appeal to the Viceroy on June 22.........On July 7, the Non-co-operation Movement Committee gave instructions about the programme consisting of the surrender of honorary titles and posts, boycott of schools and colleges, and of courts and councils, as from the 1st of August."[14] This account also indicates that it was the Khilafat Committee, and not a Conference of all parties as stated in the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, that launched the Non-co-operation movement. It also appears that no Hindu leader, other than Gandhi, took an active part in the movement started on August 1. This seems to be quite natural as the whole question was scheduled to be discussed in the Congress session in September, 1920, and it is hardly likely that any prominent Hindu leader would think of definitely participating in it till the Congress decision was known.

It is therefore not a little curious, and perhaps not without significance, that an erroneous view on such an important issue should have been propagated. Thus R. G, Pradhan states : "On 30th June a joint Hindu-Muslim Conference was held at Allahabad regarding the Khilafat question and it was unanimously resolved that Non-co-operation should be resorted to after a month's notice to the Viceroy,"[15]

Here, again, the term Hindu-Muslim Conference is misleading, as it is likely to convey the idea of an All-

Parties Conference, as stated in the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, whereas it seems to have been really a Conference held under the auspices of the Khilafat Committee, attended by some Hindus.

The attitude of Tilak towards the Non-co-operation movement initiated by Gandhi deserves more than a passing notice, as it is held by many that, but for Tilak's death shortly before the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1920, Gandhi would not have been able to carry his resolution on Non-co-operation. As mentioned above, Tilak always advocated the policy of Responsive Co-operation. After the Amritsar Congress he announced the formation of the Congress Democratic Party and issued a manifesto on behalf of it in April, 1920. The Party proposed "to work the Montagu Reforms Act for all it is worth and for accelerating the grant of full Responsible Government, and for this purpose, it will without hesitation offer co-operation or resort to constitutional opposition, whichever may be expedient and best calculated to give effect to the popular will."[16]

There is nothing on record to show that Tilak later changed his views. But a few facts have been brought forward to prove that he was gradually veering round to the principle of Non-co-operation. It is said by Asaf Ali that Gandhi placed a detailed programme of Non-co-operation in a meeting of Hindu and Muslim leaders in Delhi on January 19,1920. Tilak was present in this meeting but left it before it ended as he had another engagement. But before he left he said : "Whatever may be your decision, you may take it that I agree with it, for I am ready to go much further than your programme."[17]

That Tilak's concurrence refers to the Khilafat programme and not to a general Congress policy of Non-co-operation appears not only from the date of the meeting,[17a] but also from what Ansari speaks of him. Tilak, we are told, support-

ed the Khilafat resolution in the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held at Banaras on May 30,[18] and was urged by Ansari to go to Allahabad where a Hindu-Muslim Conference was to be held in the first week of June. In reply Tilak said that "the Mussulmans could always count on his support in the course of the mild campaign, which they were going to start under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi." Tilak also told. Dr. Choitram at Banaras that "he had no objection to his advising Hindus to join the movement, provided Muhammadans are sincerely bent upon non-co-operation with Government." When Gandhi saw Tilak along with Shaukat Ali in Bombay, he (Tilak) said turning to the latter : "About Hindus and Muslims I will sign anything that Gandhi suggests, because I have full faith in him on the question." About Non-co-operation he said to Gandhi : "I like the programme well enough. but I have my doubts as to the country being with us under the self-denying ordinance which Non-co-operation presents to the people. I will do nothing to hinder the progress of the movement. I wish you every success, and if you gain the popular ear you will find in me an enthusiastic supporter".[19] Tilak told Mrs. Besant that "he wished for Responsive Co-operation but he thought that Gandhi wielded power that might serve India, and he would not therefore break with him."[20]

If we can rely on even the general accuracy of these reported conversations, we may trace the evolution of Non-co-operation movement, bearing in mind Tilak's indifferent attitude towards it. The movement started as a specific mode of protest against the Khilafat wrongs, at the inspiration, and under the guidance, of Gandhi. The organizers of the movement received sympathy and promise of co-operation from some Hindu leaders, including Tilak. But even up to the end of May, 1920, the movement retained its original character. About this time Gandhi conceived the idea of making Indian National Congress participate in this movement, in

order to forge the unity between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims naturally welcomed the idea with whole heart, because the new-fangled, isolated Khilafat movment would gain enormous accession of strength if an organized all-India institution of established repute like the Congress lends its strength and support to it. As regards the Hindus, a large section was attracted to the idea, partly out of devotion to Gandhi and in deference to his judgement, and partly also because they looked upon it as a master-stroke of policy of organizing a united resistance of Hindus and Muslims against the British Government. The disunion between the Hindus and the Muslims had been the chlef obstacle to the political advance of India, and Indian politicians of all shades of opinion strongly held the view that they could never achieve their political goal unless the two communities were united on a common political platform. Here was an opportunity for achieving that unity, which, as Gandhi is reported to have said, would not arise in a hundred years.

There was no doubt that the Muslim community was roused to a passionate hatred against the British,and the intensity of their anti-British feeling was not only demonstrated in mass meetings and conferences, but by a still more practical test, namely the mass exodus to Afghanistan mentioned above. They chose to live in a free Muslim country rather than in British territory in India. These symptoms misled the Hindu political leaders into an exaggerated idea of the importance of the Khilafat movement in India, and the role it was destined to play in the Muslim world. Their poor knowledge about the Muslim countries of Asia led them to place an extravagant value on an alliance between the Congress and the Khilafat Movement. The ludicrously absurd extent to which they were carried by this prospect may be judged from the following observations made by even a leader like Rajagopalachari, who is well known for his political acumen and shrewdness

of a very high degree. In 1921 he wrote :

"The Khilafat has solved the problem of distrust of Asiatic neighbours out of our future. The Indian struggle for the freedom of Islam has brought about a more lasting *entente* and a more binding treaty between the people of India and the people of the Mussalman States around it than all the *ententes* and treaties among the Governments of Europe. No wars of aggression are possible where the common people on the two sides have become grateful friends. The faith of the Mussalman is a better sanction than the seal of the European diplomats and plenipotentriaies. Not only has this great friendship between India and the Mussalman States around it removed for all times the fear of Mussalman aggression from outside, but it has erected round India a solid wall of defence against all aggression from beyond, against all greed from Europe, Russia or elsewhere. The Indian support of the Khilafat has as if by a magic wand converted what was once the pan-Islamic terror for Europe into a solid wall of friendship and defence for India." [20a]

Gandhi had undoubtedly a genuine sentiment of love and sympathy for the Muslims ; but it may be reasonably concluded that to this was added in his mind a very exaggerated importance of an alliance with the Khilafatists, somewhat on the line of Rajagopalachari's observations. This alone can explain, in a satisfactory manner, the dual role he played in Indian politics which it is not always easy to reconcile. This would be evident from the following *facts* and *dates*.

23 November, 1919—Gandhi supports the idea of Non-co-operation movement by the Muslims. ( p. 56 ).

31 December, 1919—Gandhi staunchly supports, in the Amritsar Congress, Co-operation of India (including Hindus and Muslims)

with the British Government, against the opposition of eminent Indian leaders, and professes loyalty to the British Government and faith in their goodness ( p. 51 ).

18 January, 1920—Gandhi places a detailed programme of Non-co-operation in a meeting of Hindu and Muslim leaders in Delhi (according to Asaf Ali, p. 78 ).

January-March, 1920—( i. e. before the fate of Turkey was definitely known and the reports of the Enquiry Committees on the Panjab disturbances were published ) Gandhi elaborates the scheme of Non-co-operation movement in the *'Young India'* and issues a manifesto on March 10 (pp. 57-9).

30 May, 1920— The All-India Congress Committee decides to hold a special session of the Congress to *consider* the question of Non-co-operation in view of the Panjab atrocities and dismemberment of Turkey (pp. 70-71).

1-2 June, 1920— The Khilafat Committee decides to start Non-co-operation *under the guidance of Gandhi* (p. 72-3).

1 August, 1920— Gandhi formally inaugurates Non-co-operation movement by returning the three medals which the Government had awarded him for meritorious services, and addressing a letter to the Viceroy in which he declared that the attitude of the Government with regard to Khilafat and the Panjab, as demonstrated by "events that happened

during *past month*," made it impossible for him to continue co-operation with a Government that had acted so unscrupulously and for whom he could retain neither respect nor affection[21] (p. 75).

4 September, 1920—A Special Session of the Indian National Congress meets to discuss the policy of Non-co-operation.

It is interesting to note that in his letter to the Viceroy, dated August 1, Gandhi seems to convey the impression that he had to resort to Non-co-operation because "events have happened during past month" i. e. in July 1920. Yet it will be quite clear from the chronology of events given above, that Gandhi had been not only thinking about Non-co-operation before the Amritsar Congress, in December, 1919, but also drew up a detailed programme, either almost immediately after it, on January 18, 1920, or in any case during the next three months.

There is another intriguing question that has to be faced. What was the position of Gandhi when the Special session of the Congress met at Calcutta on September 4, 1920? The resolution of Co-operation passed at the Amritsar Congress, at the instance of Gandhi himself, was still in force. Yet Gandhi had been supporting Non-co-operation since November 1919, and had openly declared himself a Non-co-operator on August 1, 1920. One cannot be blamed for holding that he had a split personality like Jekyll and Hyde, a Non-co-operator as a Khilafatist, and a Co-operator as a Congressman. The view is certainly wrong, but then the only other alternative is to suppose that he had already flouted the decision of Amritsar Congress and could only hope that the Congress would approve of his revolt by deciding in favour ot Non-co-operation.

Gandhi himself seems to have been fully conscious of

his anomalous position. and had evidently decided to go on with his Non-co-operation programme, with the Congress, if possible, and without it,if necessary. This seems to be the real explanation of his manoeuvre on the eve of the Calcutta Congress, described as follows by one of his intimate friends and devoted admirers : " In Calcutta, while the fate of N. C. O. ( Non-co-operation ) was hanging in the balance, Gandhi assembled the old Home Rulers, from whom Mrs. Besant virtually seceded, under a common banner and changed the creed of the (All-India Home Rule) League into a form since adopted by the Congress at Nagpur, as also the name of the League into Swaraj Sabha. But this Sabha *never had occasion to function*, as Calcutta accepted the cult of N. C. O., and Nagpur confirmed it."[22]

The situation as it actually developed may be briefly described as follows. That part of the Home Rule League, of which Mrs. Besant was the President, rejected her in 1919, and elected Gandhi as her successor. This was evidently due to her reactionary attitude, to which reference has been made above.[23] After the death of Tilak, Gandhi was elected the President of the All-India Home Rule League. He naturally wanted to bring it in a line with the changed political situation in the country, and a sub-committee was appointed early in September, 1920, to revise the constitution of the League. On the recommendations of this sub-committee the following changes were introduced in a general meeting of the All-India Home Rule League held in Bombay on October 3, 1920.

1. The name of the League was altered to "Swarajya Sabha"

2. The object of the Sabha was defined to be "to secure complete Swaraj in India according to the wishes of the Indian people."

3. The interpretation of the word Swaraj shall not be

extended beyond Article 1 of the Congress Constitution.

A strong section headed by M. A. Jinnah and Jamnadas Dwarkadas strongly objected to the changes, and nearly twenty members seceded from the League. Gandhi wrote a long letter trying to meet the objections of the seceders and refuting their arguments (October, 25), but Jinnah's reply thereto shows that Gandhi's efforts were not successful.[23a] But this was a matter of little practical importance, for henceforth the All-India Home Rule League or Swarajya Sabha lost its separate identity and unconsciously merged itself into the Indian National Congress.

## II. ADOPTION OF THE NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT BY THE CONGRESS

The Special session of the Congress was held in Calcutta on September 4, 1920, under the shadow of a grave national calamity, for the great national leader Tilak had passed away on August 1, 1920. It was presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai who, after a long forced internment in U.S.A., was at last permitted by the Government of India to return to his native land. The Congress met in a tense atmosphere. The whole country looked upon it with animated suspense. A new weapon, which had been forged by Gandhi and had hitherto been tried on a small scale with varying success, was now going to be hurled by India upon the mighty British Empire. The resolution moved by Gandhi read as follows :

"In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards Mussalmans of India, and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Moslem Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Mussalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him ;

"And in view of the fact that, in the matter of the events of the April of 1919, both the said Governments have grossly neglected or failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab and punish officers guilty of unsoldierly and barbarous behaviour towards them, and have exonerated Sir Michael O'Dwyer who proved himself, directly or indirectly,[23b] responsible for most of the official crimes, and callous to the sufferings of the people placed under his administration, and that the debate in the House of Commons and specially in the[23c] House of Lords betrayed a woeful lack of sympathy with the people of India, and showed virtual support of the[23d] systematic terrorism and frightfulness adopted in the Punjab, and that the latest Viceregal pronouncement is proof of entire absence of repentance in the matters of the Khilafat and the Punjab ;

"This Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two aforementioned wrongs and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of Swarajya. This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent Non-co-operation inaugurated by Mr.[23e] Gandhi until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established ;

"And inasmuch as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion, and inasmuch as Government consolidates its power through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, its law courts, and its legislative councils, and inasmuch as it is desirable in the prosecution of the movement to take the minimum risk and to call for the least sacrifice, compatible with the attainment of the desired object, this Congress earnestly advises—

(a) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in Local Bodies ;

(b) refusal to attend Government Levees, Durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials, or in their honour ;

(c) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and in place of such schools and colleges, establishment of National schools and colleges in the various provinces ;

(d) gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants, and establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid, for the settlement of private disputes ;

(e) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia ;

(f) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed Councils, and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election ;

(g) boycott of foreign goods ;

"And inasmuch as Non-co-operation has been conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice without which no nation can make real progress, and inasmuch as an opportunity should be given in the very first stage of Non-co-operation to every man, woman and child for such discipline and self-sacrifice, this Congress advises adoption of Swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale, and inasmuch as the existing mills of India with indigenous capital and control do not manufacture sufficient yarn and sufficient cloth for the requirements of the Nation, and are not likely to do so for a long time to come, this Congress advises immediate stimulation of further manufacture on a large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of the millions of weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement".

But though sponsored by Gandhi and backed by the Ali Brothers and nearly the whole Muslim bloc, the resolu-

tion was strongly opposed by a large section. The Subjects Committee debated it for three days. The substantive motion was the one drafted by the Reception Committee, and Gandhi introduced his motion by way of an amendment. There were about thirty amendments but the rest were lost and Gandhi's amendment was carried by a majority of seven votes only. In the open session of the Congress, on September 8, a resolution was moved for adjournment of the Congress till the winter session so that further time may be given to the country to consider the whole question. The mover pointed out that the discussion in the Subjects Committee left no doubt that there was a considerable body of opinion against the Non-co-operation resolution of Gandhi, and a precipitate decision might split the Congress. But the adjournment motion was lost. The resolution was opposed by C. R. Das, B. C. Pal, Annie Besant, Malaviya, Jinnah and others. Among the eminent Hindu leaders only Pandit Motilal Nehru supported Gandhi. After a prolonged debate the motion was carried by 1886 against 884 votes.[24] It was a great personal triumph for Gandhi—for he had already burnt his boats behind him, and it may be said, staked his whole political career on the favourable decision of the Congress. For his position would have been unenviable if the Congress threw out his resolution. This must have been a compelling consideration to many who supported Gandhi's resolution on Non-co-operation.[24a]

There has been much speculation about the fate of the resolution, if the Congress could have the benefit of the presence and advice of Tilak. All that can be urged with a tolerable degree of certainty is that the death of Tilak undoubtedly facilitated the assumption of unquestioning leadership by Gandhi.[24b]

As this ushers in a new era in India's struggle for freedom and marks a turning point in the history of the Indian National Congress, it is necessary to pause and

discuss the motives that prompted Gandhi to a radical change of his views. It has been held by a biographer of Gandhi that "this change, from love to rejection of the British Empire, grew out of the Jallianwalla blood bath"[25]. According to Surendra Nath Banerji, "the Rowlatt Act was the parent of Non-co-operation movement."[26] Such views have been repeated by others. But they ignore the very important fact that the Rowlatt Act was passed and Jallianwala massacre took place before the Amritsar Congress where Gandhi opposed even a milder form of Non-co-operation. One might indeed be puzzled to think out what happened during the following six months that brought about such a radical change in Gandhi's inborn sense of loyalty to the British Empire and his die-hard spirit of co-operation with the Government, which neither the Rowlatt Act nor the tragic incidents of the Panjab in 1919 could extinguish or even modify to any degree.

Gandhi's own explanation for his sudden change of front is given in the following passage in the speech with which he moved the resolution on Non-co-operation in the Calcutta Congress : "The Mussulmans of India cannot remain as honourable men, and followers of the faith of their Prophet, if they do not vindicate its honour at any cost. The Punjab has been cruelly and barbarously treated....... And it is in order to remove these two wrongs......that I have ventured to place before this country a scheme of Non-co-operation......" He did not, however, make it clear, why, in respect of the wrongs done to the Khilafat, the Musalmans of India should regard themselves on a special footing, as compared with their co-religionists in other countries. If the Muslims of Arabia and Persia, the homeland of Islam, did not feel perturbed, and even welcomed the terms offered to Turkey, why should the Musalmans of India, who derived their faith from those two countries, cease to be honourable men or followers of the

faith of their Prophet ( who belonged to Arabia ), if they did not vindicate the honour of the Khilafat ? But what is still more important, the Turks and their Caliph, themselves, did not want any domination over Arabia, demanded by the Indian Muslims ; for the Turkish deputation in January-February, 1919, after the Armistice, only pressed for political and economic independence in the area of predominantly Turkish population. What is the explanation for the Indian Muslims out-Heroding Herod himself, and the justification of the Hindus for supporting them even by taking an extreme and hazardous step ?

As regards the Panjab Gandhi rightly observed : "Inasmuch as a single Panjabi was made to crawl on his belly, the whole of India crawled that day on her belly, and it is that humiliation which you and I, if we claim to be worthy sons and daughters of India, must be pledged to remove." These are noble sentiments, but one wonders how, with all the crawlings and hundred other indignities of the people of the Panjab fresh in his memory, Gandhi could put his whole weight on loyal co-operation with the British in the Amritsar Congress, and fight against those who proposed to vindicate the wrongs of the Panjab by a programme of Non-co-operation, which he now proposed.

The same personal explanation, with slight variations, is found in Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy on August 1, 1920, and more particularly in the statement which he had made before Justice Broomfield during his trial in March, 1922. The relevant passage runs as follows :—

"The first shock came in the shape of Rowlatt Act......... Then followed the Punjab horrors......I discovered, too, that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussulmans of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the foreboding and the grave

warnings of friends, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919, I fought for co-operation and working the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, hoping the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Mussulmans, that the Panjab wound would be healed, and that the Reforms, inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India. But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was whitewashed, and most culprits were not only unpunished but remained in service, and some continued to draw pensions from the Indian revenue, and in some cases were even rewarded. I saw, too, that not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude."

In view of the saintly character of Gandhi, and particularly his solicitude for truth, no one has a right to disbelieve the above statement. But history is no respecter of persons, and is bound to judge the conduct of a public man by certain rational standards. A person who is not blinded by unquestioning faith in, and devotion to, Gandhi, and is in a position to take an unprejudiced and detached view, may, while appreciating the sentiments of Gandhi, find it difficult to admit the soundness of his views and the wisdom of his judgment. As regards the Khilafat question, it was the height of political unwisdom to make it a chief plank or problem in the struggle for freedom waged by India against the British. India might certainly have expressed her sympathy with Turkey and others ;- the Musalman citizens of India might feel perturbed by the curtailing of the power of the Khilafat over their holy places ; but, as pointed out above, the Muslims outside India did not share their views and, in any case, it was not for India to make it

the first issue in her political struggle against the British. But Gandhi's action might appear to many to be still more objectionable. By joining with a separate Musalman organization acting independently of the Congress, and in deciding upon Non-co-operation solely on this issue, while the Congress at his instance had decided at Amritsar to co-operate with the Government, he put a premium upon the extra-territorial nationality of the Indian Muslims. In other words, he upheld the right of the Muslims in India to look upon Turkey or Khilafat as more important than their own country, India. This cut at the very root of Indian nationality. As John Stuart Mill has very correctly observed, different groups of men inhabiting a country may be said to constitute a nationality only when they are united by common sympathies which do not exist between any constituent group and outsiders. If the Muslims of India felt themselves in duty bound to take an extreme step against the Government for undoing the wrongs done to the Khilafat which they did not consider necessary to adopt for redressing the wrongs of the Panjab or attaining self-government for India, they could hardly be regarded as a constituent group of the Indian nation.

It is sad to find that even such shrewd statesmen as Rajagopalachari did not realize this aspect in their over-zealous enthusiasm for the Indian support of the Khilafat.[27] There were, however, many eminent Indians who disapproved of the conduct of Gandhi.

But, apart from this theoretical objection, will it be seriously contended that a man with even a moderate knowledge of European politics could have failed to see in September, 1920, or even in December, 1919, what was in store for Turkey? If Gandhi had honestly believed that the threat or agitation of Indian Musalmans in September, 1920, would induce the British Government

to re-open the question which had already been settled in consonance with the general policy adopted by the victorious Allies towards the resettlement of Europe, and force the latter to adopt a radically new policy, one cannot entertain a very high opinion of his knowledge of European history, or of his political acumen, to say the least of it.

Similarly, the ominous silence of the Government of India about the tragic happenings in the Panjab for a period of about eight months, and the composition of the inquiry committee which they were reluctantly forced to appoint, should not have left any hope that the Panjab wounds would be healed, even on the assumption that the grievous wounds could be healed by any action of the Government of India. There should not have been any reasonable doubt in the mind of any one in December, 1919, that the inhuman atrocities in the Panjab were done with full knowledge and connivance, if not encouragement, of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, and the action was tacitly, if not directly, approved by the Government of India and condoned by the Home Government. The attitude displayed by the Government of India during the six months that followed the Amritsar Congress was therefore neither unexpected nor so strikingly grave in character as might justify Gandhi's complete somersault in respect of his feelings of loyalty towards the British. But the most mysterious is the last sentence in the statement of Gandhi in the Court, quoted above, which adds a third ground for his action, not included in his letter to the Viceroy. His favourable attitude towards the Reforms is explicitly indicated by his articles in the *Young India*, and the part he played in the Amritsar Congress[28]. How, one wonders, did Gandhi realize, even before the Reforms were actually put into operation, that they were only a method of "further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude"? The draining of the wealth of India, so pathetically described by Dadabhai Naoroji and Digby, and her

abject servitude for one hundred and sixty years could not materially impair Gandhi's attachment to the British rule, and left Gandhi sufficiently loyal to extend his hand of co-operation up to the end of 1919 ; what new knowledge, gained in course of six or seven months following it, outweighed the experience of 160 years, it is not easy to determine. Besides, as indicated above, Gandhi seems to have decided upon Non-co-operation before the events, he complained of, actually took place. On the whole it would have been difficult to accept the explanation, at least as whole truth, if it were offered by a lesser man than Gandhi. A more rational explanation of the change of Gandhi's mind seems to be that he could sense the great change in the temperament of the people, and either realized his own mistake or wished to be in a line with his own countrymen. One could also explain his attitude towards the Khilafat problem as a matter of expediency, for Gandhi himself is reported to have said that it provided "such an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muhammadans as would not arise in a hundred years".[29] But none of these fits in with the known character of Gandhi. He never hesitated to admit his own errors, and never allowed himself to be moved by mere popular feelings or expediency, unless he was convinced that the course was right.

We are, therefore, bound to accept the explanation offered by Gandhi himself, though it is sure provoke the criticism that the nobility of his character was not matched by his political acumen. In this connection one may remember what Gandhi once wrote : "My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statement on a given question, but to be consistent with the truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result is that I have grown from truth to truth".[30] This may be a lofty utterance from the point of view of personal ethics, but may often be dangerous in a political leader. For, if he does not choose to disclose the grounds for his change of views

and invite public discussion on the matter, the only alternative for the people is to accept, without demur, whatever the leader says and follow blindly his directions, or to reject his leadership. The latter course was almost impossible in the case of Gandhi, who had established his position among the masses more by his ascetic ideals and saintly character than by political wisdom or a cut and dried political programme. The fact that Gandhi carried his pro-British resolution in 1919 in spite of the opposition of prominent Indian leaders like Tilak, C. R. Das and Jinnah, and again, without more ado, carried the opposite resolution eight months later in 1920, again in the teeth of opposition by C.R.Das and other leaders, proves beyond doubt that he had already attained the position of spiritual *guru* in politics, whose word was law. This was further demonstrated by the Nagpur Congress of 1920 where leaders like C. R. Das 'who came to scoff, remained to pray'.[30a] The Calcutta resolution was the first, but not the last, of Gandhi's political somersaults, which puzzled his contemporaries, irritated many, and alienated a few, but were nevertheless accepted in principle and carried into practice by the overwhelming majority of the people.[30b]

Before leaving this topic it is necessary to draw attention to the third para of the Non-co-operation resolution moved by Gandhi and accepted by the Congress. It conveys the definite idea that *Swaraj* was demanded only to redress Panjab and Khilafat wrongs, and thereby vindicate national honour and prevent their repetition in future. This side-tracks the main issue of the fight for freedom, and unnecessarily emphasizes only two side-issues. The inclusion of Khilafat wrongs as a ground for demanding *Swaraj* would perhaps appear to many as nothing short of grotesque. Even the Panjab wrongs, grievous though they were, should not have been put forward as the basis of demand for *Swaraj*. By adopting this

para, political India went back upon what had hitherto been regarded as the fundamental issue, so tersely put by Tilak : "Swaraj is my birth-right and I shall have it."

Gandhi's occasional utterance in this respect perhaps deserves even stronger condemnation. When, after about a year, the Non-co-operation movement failed to redress the grievances of the Muslims and they grew impatient, Gandhi wrote :

"In their impatient anger, the Musalmans ask for more energetic and more prompt action by the Congress and Khilafat organisations. To the Musalmans, Swaraj means, *as it must mean*, India's ability to deal effectively with the Khilafat question. The Musalmans, therefore, decline to wait if the attainment of Swaraj means indefinite delay....
"It is impossible not to sympathise with this attitude. ...*I would gladly ask for postponement of Swaraj activity if thereby we could advance the interest of the Khilafat.......*

"But in my humble opinion, attainment of Swaraj is the quickest method of righting the Khilafat wrong...."[30c]

Thus according to Gandhi's own confession, the freedom of India was valued chiefly as a means to the restoration of the authority of the Turkish Sultan, and he was even prepared to give up the struggle for India's freedom, if anybody could suggest a quicker remedy for achieving the same end. Comment is superfluous upon such a statement made by one whom the country hailed as "Father of the Nation", meaning obviously Indian and not Muslim nation.

## III. THE NAGPUR CONGRESS—DECEMBER, 1920

The mystic element in Indian politics which was noted in the sudden change of front by Gandhi in the first part of 1920, persisted throughout the year. This is amply evident from the proceedings of the Annual session of the Congress held at Nagpur in December, 1920, under the Presidentship of Vijayaraghavachariar. The resolution on Non-co-operation passed in the Special session of the Congress at Calcutta had to be ratified in the regular

session. There was unprecedented enthusiasm and more than 14,000 attended the Congress.[30d]

It was generally expected that there would be a fresh trial of strength between Gandhi and the opponents of Non-co-operation. But, curiously enough, no such thing took place, and the resolution was ratified with only a few dissentient voices. This was mainly due to another inexplicable and sudden political somersault,—this time on the part of C. R. Das. Subhas Chandra Bose, who shortly afterwards became the most confidential lieutenant of Das, gives the following version of the whole affair :

" Mr. Das and his followers mustered strong at Nagpur hoping to cross swords with Mr. Gandhi once again. But through the latter's tactful handling of the situation an understanding was arrived at between him and Mr. Das. The boycott of the legislatures, to which Mr. Das was chiefly opposed, was no longer a live issue as the elections had already taken place. It was therefore possible to persuade Mr. Das to come to an agreement. When this was done, the non-co-operation resolution was ratified with practical unanimity, though Pandit Malaviya, Mrs. Besant, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. B. C. Pal remained irreconcileable."[31]

The explanation is vague and unconvincing. Das did not indicate in the Calcutta session that his opposition was limited to the boycott of legislature. Even if it were so, the holding of one election could not be a decisive factor, as there was to be another election after three years. Besides, Bose's own statement that Das started for Nagpur with a strong contingent to fight against Gandhi takes away the force of his argument, for even before Das started for Nagpur, the election was over and the boycott of legislature 'had ceased to be a living issue'. Here, again,one might ask, what happened during his stay at Nagpur —perhaps during less than twenty-four hours—which

induced Das to give up the fight and join wholeheartedly with Gandhi ? The incident further shows the beginning of dictatorial regime ( or *guruvad* ) in Indian politics. Das was no less a dictator in the restricted sphere of Bengal than Gandhi in the rest of India. It seems that the rank and file of Congress politicians had gladly and willingly surrendered their political judgment and conscience to the safekeeping of a few individuals. There were a few honourable exceptions, including those mentioned above by Bose. Among these Mrs. Besant veered round to the Moderate camp. Jinnah gave pointed expression to his disapproval,—and this is worth noting as it marks the beginning of his estrangement from the Congress politics dominated by Gandhi. Jinnah was the only one who strongly fought against the Non-co-operation resolution at Nagpur, and when Gandhi asked for his co-operation, he replied as follows :

" I thank you for your kind suggestion offering me to take my share in the new life that has opened up before the country. If by "new life" you mean your methods and your programme, I am afraid I cannot accept them, for I am fully convinced that it must lead to disaster......Your methods have already caused split and division in the public life of the country, not only amongst Hindus and Muslims, but between Hindus and Hindus and Muslims and Muslims, and even between fathers and sons ; people generally are desperate all over the country and your extreme programme has for the moment struck the imagination mostly of the inexperienced youth and the ignorant and illiterate."[32]

Another political leader, who raised his voice of protest and whose forebodings proved almost prophetic, was G.S. Khaparde, a co-worker of Tilak, who published a short memorandum on December 10,1920, pointing out how the Non-co-operation resolution, passed in Calcutta session, was calcu-

lated to "divert the energies of the Congress into directions of attaining soul force and moral excellence, and lose sight of the political aspect of affairs." "The N.C.O.", it continued, "as preached now, may develop powers of endurance, but cannot breed the energy and resourcefulness and practical wisdom necessary for a political struggle. The three boycotts, at present recommended, are futile and have not at all a distinct political aspect, and the tendency of the whole, as evidenced in the proceedings for alteration of the creed of the All-India Home Rule League, now renamed Swaraj Sabha, would appear to be towards a return to autocracy and personal rule, which is objectionable and against the spirit of the age, though entrusted to a highly developed and moral individual."[33]

Three members of the British Labour Party—Colonel Wedgwood, Mr. Ben Spoor, and Mr. Holford Knight,—attended the Congress session. Wedgwood, who was permitted to attend the Subjects Committee with his two colleagues and was also permitted to take part therein, gravely warned the Congress against N.C.O. "You will make it difficult for your friends in England to take up your cause", said he. "You are going into the wilderness. You must pursue a constructive programme". He was immediately met with the blunt reply : "We have no friends outside India ; let there be no mistake about that. Our salvation lies in our own hands. We must make or mar our future. We are going into the wilderness, we know, because the way to the 'land flowing with milk and honey', the land of Canaan, from the land of our bondage, lies only through a wilderness. And we trust to the leadership of a Moses or an Aaron to lead us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to life". There is no doubt that this speech reflected the sentiment, not only of the people in general, but also of a vast majority of the politicians of the Nationalist school who attended the Congress. C.R.Das, who came prepared to oppose

N.C.O., himself moved and Lala Lajpat Rai seconded the resolution about N.C.O. It was long and comprehensive, and virtually reaffirmed the one passed in Calcutta, covering the whole field, from the renunciation of titles at one end to the refusal to pay taxes to the other. It laid emphasis on non-violence as an integral part of the N.C.O. movement and requested those elected to the Council to resign their seats. By a separate resolution the country was asked to refrain from taking any part in functions or festivities in honour of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught.

A number of other decisions adopted at the Nagpur session makes it a landmark in the history of the Congress.

In the Amritsar session of the Congress in 1919, Gandhi was authorized to prepare the draft of a new constitution for the Congress. On the basis of this draft certain important changes were made in the constitution. The goal of the Congress was defined in the existing constitution as "self-government within the British Empire". This kept out of the Congress a radical section whose political ideal was complete independence. To accommodate this section the goal of the Congress was declared to be 'Swaraj'. It literally means self-rule, and neither long usage nor any generally accepted convention had given any definite connotation to it. It was evidently kept deliberately vague so that each individual member might satisfy his conscience by putting any interpretation upon the word he likes. Gandhi defined 'Swaraj' to mean "self-government within the empire, if possible, and outside, if necessary."

The Congress was reorganized on the basis of a gradation of committees, beginning from village, the smallest unit, through gradually increasing areas like sub-division, district, and province, to the All-India Congress Committee of about 350 members. This Committee was to elect a Working Committee of 15 members which would be the supreme Executive of the Congress for the whole country. The

provinces, for the purpose of the above organization, were re-arranged on a linguistic basis ; Madras, for example, being divided into Andhra and Tamil-nadu. The Subjects Committee was henceforth to be composed of the members of the AICC alone and was to meet 2 or3 days before the open session of the Congress.

Another important change was the substitution of the words "all peaceful and legitimate means" for the existing "constitutional means", which defined the method to be followed by the Congress in achieving the goal. This was evidently a compromise between the Moderate section represented by Malaviya and Jinnah and the Radical section who demanded absolute independence to be achieved by all possible means. Gandhi's influence induced the extreme section to accept the compromise.

## IV. THE NAGPUR PROGRAMME

### I. Constructive Work

The movement launched by Gandhi, on which the Nagpur Congress put its imprimatur with almost rare unanimity, had two aspects which may be called positive and negative, or constructive and destructive. The former included the promotion of *Swadeshi*, particularly the revival of hand spinning and weaving, removal of untouchability among the Hindus, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition of the use of alcoholic drinks, and the collection of a crore of Rupees for the memorial of Tilak ( in the shape of a *Swarajya* fund ). The spinning and weaving—two lost arts of India, of which the first was almost a forgotten one—were no doubt originally intended as a means of economic uplift of the masses, but to this was later added a symbolic—one might almost say, political and ethical—significance which gave it a sacrosant character. Gandhi even went so far as to declare that the *Charka* ( spinning wheel ) was the key to India's freedom,—as soon as India would be able to weave its own

cloth, '*Swaraj*' would be realized. Some of the eminent nationalist leaders like B. C. Pal regarded this as going too far and refused to see in the spindle the veritable secret of, or way to, India's political freedom.

The destructive side is usually referred to as the triple boycott,—namely, boycott of legislature, courts, and educational institutions, both schools and colleges maintained or aided by the Government. The ideas of Passive Resistance and Civil Disobedience, though not explicitly included in the programme, seem to have been tacitly permitted, though under strict limitations, whenever necessary to carry out the above programme. The minor items of boycott included surrender of titles, honours, etc. as formulated in the resolution, quoted above, of the Congress in its special Session at Calcutta. Some constructive work was directly necessitated by the destructive programme, such as setting up arbitration boards where cases might be decided out of courts, and national schools and colleges where students leaving old schools and colleges might continue their education. By a reverse process, the boycott of foreign goods, particularly foreign cloth, formed an important item by way of promoting *Swadeshi*.

Immediately after the Nagpur session Gandhi made an extensive and prolonged tour of the country in order to popularize the N. C. O. movement. It seems that at first the constructive side was more emphasized than the destructive. The All-India Congress Committee, meeting at Bezwada on March 31, 1921, passed resolutions "calling upon all workers to concentrate their attention chiefly on (1) collecting a crore of Rupees for the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund; (2) enlisting a crore of members ; and (3) introducing 20 lakhs of *Charkas* (spinning wheels) in Indian households; all this before the 30th June 1921". The first item was successfully carried out, the fund being over-subscribed by 15 lakhs of Rupees. The membership reached more than

fifty lakhs and the number of *Charkas* almost reached the target. Gandhi was at first against the boycott of foreign goods, as it was, in his opinion, a form of violence, but he changed his views in a few months and laid great emphasis on it. In its meeting at Bombay on July 28, 1921, the All-India Congress Committee sent detailed instructions to all Congress organizations in order to attain "complete boycott of foreign cloth by the 30th September next," and asked them to concentrate their attention upon manufacture of *Khaddar* by stimulating hand-spinning and hand-weaving. It also approved the picketing of liquor shops which had already begun, but deplored the excesses committed by the mob at Aligarh and Malegaon.

The weaving and popularizing of *Khaddar* made some progress, but the production was slow and far behind the target aimed at. As to the consumption of liquor, it underwent a marked decline due to vigorous picketing of liquor shops, and there was a substantial fall in the revenue of the Government, but "after the removal of the pickets, the pendulum swung back and the evil asserted itself again in full force."[34]

The All-India Congress Committee at Bombay, while passing the resolution on the boycott of foreign cloth, also advised all Congress organizations "to collect foreign cloth for destruction or use outside India at their option." This provoked a heated discussion and several amendments were moved against the burning of cloth or its being sent out to Smyrna for the use of the Turkish forces. Patel, supported by Kelkar, opposed the destruction of foreign cloth which he thought was valued roughly at hundred crores and which he described as national wealth, especially at a time when millions were either ill-clad or naked. Gandhi vigorously supported the burning of cloth by the consumers, though not by the cloth-dealers. Immediately after the session of the AICC, the city of

Bombay displayed great enthusiasm in this item. Numerous meetings were held urging the boycott of foreign cloth, and arrangement was made for a great spectacular demonstration of burning it. The following is the contemporary account of a scene :

"On July 31 there was a gathering of some two to three thousand people to witness the great holocaust. The pile of foreign cloth collected was ranged in an enormous circle about a mile in diameter and some three feet high. All sorts of foreign clothing from rich brocades and silk *saris* to torn hats, coats, neckties and collars, were thrown into the pile. All the prominent provincial leaders who had gone to Bombay to attend the AICC meeting were present, and also a few hundreds of ladies. Gandhi came in the evening and applied a lighted match to the pile. At once the fire leaped up and went round the circle in a few minutes, and in about a couple of hours the huge pile worth some crores of Rupees was burnt to ashes."[35]

Similar bonfires, though not on such a grand scale, were made in other towns, and this became almost a regular feature of the programme of cloth boycott. Eminent men, including poet Rabindranath, made vigorous protest against this "insensate waste" of cloth when millions were going half-naked. Gandhi gave a spirited reply in his paper, the *Young India*. "Critics", said he, "have overwhelmed me with their rebuke regarding the burning of foreign cloth. After having considered every argument advanced against it, I cannot help saying that destruction is the best method of dealing with foreign cloth."

But in spite of spectacular demonstration of the burning of foreign cloth, the boycott of foreign cloth did not show satisfactory progress, as was admitted by the Working Committee at its Bombay meeting on 5

October, 1921. As regards other items of constructive programme it is difficult to recognize any substantial progress either in the removal of untouchability and other class distinctions among the Hindus, or in the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity. The deplorable communal riots in Malabar and at Multan, to which reference will be made later, rather show a worsening of the situation, even though the Congressmen, as usual, attributed all incidents to mischief-makers. The elaborate review of this point in the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee is almost pathetic in its simplicity of faith in the inherent Hindu-Muslim fraternity, and crude, almost incredible tendency to ignore hard facts.

2. Boycott

The destructive side of the Non-co-operation movement was also pursued with zeal. The two most exciting items in this connection were the boycott of legislature and educational institutions. Serious attempts were made at the time of the election in November, 1920, to persuade persons, particularly Congressmen, not to stand for election, and the voters to abstain from registering their votes. These activities were, of course, shortlived and came to an end as soon as the elections were over. Far more protracted, and at first far more active and successful, was the country-wide agitation for the boycott of schools and colleges. Eminent leaders appealed to the students to leave their institution, and the response was, in some parts, most enthusiastic.

*i. Volunteer Organization*

But there is no doubt that much of the success in regard to this item was due to picketing by students themselves. Picketing was also an essential feature in stopping the sale of liquors and foreign goods. This work was mainly done by the National Volunteers—a body thoroughly reorganized for carrying out the programme of Non-co-operation.

Long before the commencement of this movement there were Congress Volunteer Associations in almost all parts of India whose main activities, besides helping the arrangements for the annual sessions of the Congress, were confined to social and philanthropic service, such as helping the pilgrims on special occasions when there was a great rush, maintaining order in religious fairs, relief work in times of epidemic, famine or floods, etc. The Khilafat agitation led to the growth of a body of volunteers who were from the very beginning, of a more militant character, and in many places wore uniforms and practised drills and route marches. These two bodies were now combined, though not actually fused into a single organization under one command, and came to be known as National Volunteers. It was mainly with the help of these volunteers that the Congress carried on not only the picketing which was essential for preventing the sale of liquors and foreign goods, but also the enforcement of other items, both constructive and destructive, through social and economic pressure as far as possible. Though pledged to non-violence their activities were described by Government as subversive of order and discipline. "Attempts to usurp functions of police, intimidation and use of violence to enforce *hartals* and social and commercial boycott, or under guise of *swadeshi* or temperance movements in order to impair authority of Government and terrorise political opponents, have been prominent features of their recent activities". This view of Government was not certainly without foundation, though the evils and shortcomings were considerably magnified by them.

### *ii. Boycott of Councils*

The object of boycotting the Councils was to bring about a complete deadlock in administration. Gandhi hoped that there would be a wholesale abstention of voters from voting. To the argument that the whole country will not respond to this and

the Moderates will steal into the Councils, he replied : "Will a single Moderate leader care to enter any Council if more than half his electorate disapproved of his offering himself as a candidate at all ?[36] I hold that it would be unconstitutional for him to do so." From this point of view the movement for boycotting the Councils was a complete failure. All the Congress candidates had withdrawn from the contest in obedience to the mandate of the Calcutta Congress, and all the seats were filled up by non-Congressmen. Just out of fun, or out of spite, the Congressmen put a cobbler as a candidate from a seat in Bengal and he was duly returned. But though the Congress was undeniably strong and could easily command majority of votes in almost all Hindu constituencies, it was not strong enough to prevent at least a quarter of the total number of voters from casting their votes and thereby render the election void or ineffectual, as they hoped. The Congress, however, succeeded in proving to the world that the Legislative Councils elected under the new constitution had no claim to represent the people of India. This was frankly admitted even by high British officials. Thus on November 22, 1924, in the course of a farewell speech, Sir Frank Sly, the Governor of C.P.,observed : "At the first election many of the electors, under the influence of the Non-co-operation movement, abstained from voting, and members were returned to the Legislative Council who could not claim to be really representative of public opinion, and some of whom were unfit to exercise the responsibilities of their position".[37]

### iii. *Boycott of Law-Courts*

The boycott of legal profession was heralded by the magnificent self-sacrifice of Pandit Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, both leaders of the Bar and enjoying a princely income. They gave up their practice, and their example was followed by a large number of

lawyers. Here, again, the boycott was more spectacular than effective, for the number of boycotting lawyers, though perhaps exceeding a thousand to start with, but gradually dwindling as time passed, were not large enough in proportion to their total strength, and hence could not make any impression upon, far less cripple, the work of the British law-courts. The attempt to dissuade the people from resorting to British courts and settle their litigation by boards of arbitration set up by the Congress or village *panchayats*, though partially successful in a few localities, did not achieve any important result.

### *iv. Boycott of Schools and Colleges*

The programme of boycotting schools and colleges at first created great enthusiasm. It was foreshadowed by the All-India College Students' Conference held at Nagpur on December 25, 1920, under the Chairmanship of Lala Lajpat Rai. In his Presidential address he denounced the view that "students ought not to have to do anything with politics." He thought that "while students ought to be free to study politics, have opinions on political questions and express them at times, whenever there is need, through their organization, they ought to steer clear of politics. Otherwise this organization might be turned into a political organization, and the division among political parties will be carried into the students' camp". As regards the item of the boycott of schools and colleges in the Non-co-operation programme he gave the following advice : " Leave at once the Law Colleges. Do not leave Medical, Engineering, and Technical Schools. As regards Arts Colleges, consider the situation well and if you really feel the call of duty, leave the Arts Colleges, but under no delusion that some one is going to make provision in National Schools established by the leaders of the National Congress."[38]

The Conference met again on December 26, 1920,

with Mr. Pickthal, Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, in the chair. There was a heated debate on the boycott of Government-aided schools and colleges. A resolution was passed to the effect that 'the Conference whole-heartedly supports the immediate and unconditional boycott of Government and Government-aided colleges, and advises the college students of India to respond to it.' By another resolution national leaders were requested to establish National Colleges, including provision for technical education. A programme of work was laid down for the student Non-co-operators,. The students of India were requested by another resolution to use only their vernacular in their correspondence, daily talk and provincial deliberations.

The Students' Conference, and the almost unanimous adoption of the Non-co-operation resolution by the Congress, at Nagpur had great repercussion upon students all over the country. The greatest upheaval took place in Calcutta on January 12, 1921, as a large number of students left their colleges, marched through the streets in procession, and gathered in a meeting addressed by Congress leaders like C. R. Das and B. C. Pal. In course of the next week, many more students came out and processions and mammoth meetings became the order of the day. The teachers, however, with rare exceptions, did not join the students' strike. The example of Calcutta was followed by many Mofussil colleges. The boycotting students adopted a novel method of picketing in order to prevent others form entering the colleges. A number of them l flat, side by side, on the pavements of the doorways, blocking the entrance. The students, willing to attend, had either to tread upon the bodies of their fellow-students or abstain from attendance. It is easy to understand why many chose the latter alternative. The initial success of the boycott was mainly due to this practice, whose non-violent character may justly be questioned. But,

as noted above, the boycott of colleges, thus artificially maintained, did not, in the long run, prove very effective. This result was also partly due to the attitude of Gandhi. Hitherto the students merely boycotted the existing colleges in order to join National institutions which were slowly springing up in different parts of India. Gandhi, however, made it clear that he wanted the students to give up their education and join in the fight against bureaucracy by devoting their whole time and energy to the national movement. He cited the analogy of belligerent countries in Europe during the World War where the colleges were closed down and the students drawn to war-work. In this national crisis, said Gandhi, students were to think not of education but of *Swaraj*. This appeal, however,found little response.

There was a great commotion among the students of the D. A. V. College at Lahore, and Lala Lajpat Rai requested its authorities to convert it into a national institution. The Managing Committee, however, refused to do so. On January 25, the students of the college held a meeting at Gujranwala which was addressed by Rambhuj Dutt Choudhuri and Lajpat Rai. The former appealed to the students to give up their studies at once and join the national movement to win *Swaraj*. Lajpat Rai asked the students to leave the D. A. V. College so that it might be converted into a true national college. "But", he added, "remember one thing, dont be a bluffer. Think and consult your conscience. Do not leave the college unless you are absolutely determined to follow your conscience. But once you take the step, do not recede."

The meeting was followed by the Panjab Students' Conference at Gujranwala on January 30, with Dr. Kitchelew as President. It passed a resolution urging upon all students above the age of 16 "to make immediate and effective response to the call of the nation by unconditional withdrawal from all arts, science, and professional institutions connected

with the Government."

In the meanwhile the students of other colleges went on strike on January 27, and passed similar resolutions in their meetings. Most of the colleges had to be closed down for the time being. But by the end of February, the movement for strike practically died down both in Calcutta and Lahore.

There were commotions in varying degrees, but no strong movement of students in other parts of India. On the whole, the movement for the boycott of schools and colleges proved a failure. Though quite a large number of students gave up their studies, the movement never gained sufficient strength, and failed to create any lasting impression or produce any serious effect on the existing institutions. Many of the students who came out rejoined their old institutions ; some resumed their studies in newly started national schools and colleges ; only a small band remained steadfast to their resolve, at least for many years to come.

But the boycott of courts and educational institutions produced most significant and far-reaching consequences in another direction. Men like Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das, along with others, now devoted their whole time and energy to the service of the country. So did most of the students who gave up their studies. For the first time in the history of modern India there was a select band of whole-time workers, both leaders and rank and file, all over the country, who made the freedom of India their only goal in life and consecrated themselves to its achievement. There were many who took to the service of the country as a whole-time job rather than a pastime of leisure time ; and their example had a profound influence over others ; all this changed the entire outlook of the country, and gave a new zeal and spirit to India's struggle for freedom. The ideal of Bankim Chandra's *Anandamath*, and the idea with which Gokhale started the 'Servants of India Society' at last came to fruition.

### *v. Miscellaneous*

The Boycott of titles and honours as well as of Government offices was a hopeless failure. The number of persons who renounced honours and titles was very small compared to the total number. But it is an undeniable fact that these titles and honours henceforth ceased to be distinctions in the estimation of the people at large, and generally came to be regarded as badges of slavery. Many holders of titles, though unable to renounce them for fear of incurring the displeasure of Government, really felt uncomfortable, and gradually the display of the so-called honours and their recognition as such were confined to Government functions.

As regards the resignation of Government jobs, the response was insignificant and negligible. But there were a few remarkable instances. Subhas Candra Bose, the future Netaji, who passed the I. C. S. in 1920, resigned his post in May, 1921. P. C. Ghosh, who later became the Chief Minister of Bengal, also r esigned a lucrative appointment. There were a few other cases, too.

More spectacular success attended the movement for boycotting the visits of H. R. H. the Duke of Connaught and the Prince of Wales as will be related later.

## 3. The Policy of the Government

It is very significant that the Government at first did not take any serious notice of the activities of the Non-co-operators, except in cases of picketing and burning of foreign cloths, which led to disturbances, either real, or artificially created by *agents-provacateurs* of the Government. The disturbances were followed by the usual *lathi* charge, brutal assault and imprisonment.

The gradual evolution of the policy of the Government of India towards the Non-co-operation movement has been admirably summed up in the long telegraph which the Viceroy sent to the Secretary of State for

India on February 9, 1922, thus covering the entire period during which the movement was in force. As early as April, 1920, instructions were issued by Lord Chelmsford's Government that there should be prompt prosecution of all persons tampering with the loyalty of the troops or the Police, and a scheme for instituting counter-propaganda was formulated in July of the same year. In September instructions were issued to Local Governments to take action vigorously to prosecute for all incitements to violence, and their attention was drawn in October to the dangerous potentialities which lay in the Volunteer movement. Lastly, in November 1920, a resolution was issued by the Government of India defining their general attitude towards the Non-co-operation campaign. It was explained that, although the entire movement was unconstitutional, they had refrained from instituting criminal proceedings against such of its promoters as had advocated simultaneously with non-co-operation abstention from violence, and they had given instructions to Local Governments that action should be taken against those persons only, who, in order to further the movement, had advanced beyond the limits which its organisers had originally set up, and had openly incited the public to violence by speech or writing, or endeavoured to tamper with the loyalty of the army or the Police. The following considerations had influenced Government in adopting this policy :-

1. Reluctance to interfere with the freedom of the Press and liberty of speech at a time when India was on the threshold of a great advance towards self-government.

2. The knowledge that those against whom prosecution might be directed ( some of whom were actuated by honest, if misguided motives ) would be likely to find in it the opportunity of posing as martyrs, and that they

might swell the number of adherents to their cause by evoking false sympathy.

3. The belief that Non-co-operation would be rejected by the country as a visionary and a chimerical scheme.......

In the above communication reference is made to a system of counter-propaganda by the Government. It took two forms. The Government subsidised some papers and issued leaflets with a view to emphasizing the evils of the Non-co-operation movement and defending the policy of the Government. It is hardly necessary to point out that this was a mere waste of money, paid to certain favoured individuals for their loyalty, and had absolutely no effect on the class of people whom the Government had in view. The second form of the propaganda was to convince the people of the great powers conceded to them by the Reforms of 1919. We may quote from the telegraph referred to above : "Government at the same time took every opportunity during the first session of the reformed legislature of convincing Indian opinion that the reforms were real and great, and that they had conferred on the representatives of the people wide powers, and that there was a readiness to inquire into the cause of discontent, or any specific grievances. It was, for example, agreed to refer to non-official Committees of the Legislature certain Acts which conferred extraordinary powers on the Executive, as well as the Acts regulating the conduct of the Press ; the greatest consideration was shown in framing the Budget to the opinion of the Legislature."

4. Gandhi and the Ali Brothers.

During the early part of 1921 Gandhi and the Ali Brothers succeeded in bringing about such a unity of aims and activities between the Hindus and Muslims as was never witnessed before or since. The Muslims, as

a general rule, plunged into the movement with a greater zeal and enthusiasm, and consequently suffered, in the hands of the Government, a great deal more than the Hindus. It was indeed complained by the Muslims that while they formed only a small minority of the population, they had to bear the greater share of the brunt on their shoulders. This was true to a large extent. The reason lies in the fact that the appeal to the Muslims was mainly religious in character, while the Hindus were inspired by national sentiments alone. The Non-co-operation movement proved once more that religion had a stronger hold on the minds of the people than the country, and this was certainly true of the Muslims. Though not fully realized at the time by Congressmen, it demonstrated quite clearly that the edifice of the Hindu-Muslim unity was founded on an artificial basis, and not designed on a clear-cut national plan. But as times passed, this aspect gradually forced itself on the public mind. The Pan-Islamic spirit behind the Khilafat agitation, which has been discussed in detail in this and the preceding chapter, gradually revealed itself in the speeches of the Muslim leaders, who further showed but scant respect to the spirit of non-violence. As noted above, even Muhammad Ali, Gandhi's disciple in non-violence, spoke openly that he was a Muslim first and everything else afterwards, and did not leave any doubt about the scope and meaning of this pregnant phrase when he said that if the Amir of Afghanistan were to invade India for the liberation (?) of the country, it would be the duty of all Muslims to assist him actively.[39] As a matter of fact, the speeches of Muslim leaders mainly laid stress on the religious character of the war waged against the English by the Muslims of India in combination with their brethren in faith beyond the north-western frontier of India, i. e. the wild tribes and the people of Afghanistan, whose past domination in India was a

bitter and painful memory to every Hindu. The Hindus were rudely shocked, particularly as even Gandhi lent indirect support to the utterances of his 'dear brother' Muhammad Ali.[40] But, as noted above,[41] such was the magic spell of Gandhi over the Hindus, that in spite of protests and murmurring from certain sections, they were not affected in any way by the Pan-Islamic spirit of the Khilafatists, or even by the shocking atrocities perpetrated by the Muslims upon the Hindus on a large scale in Malabar, to which detailed reference will be made later. The lure of the coveted goal of Hindu-Muslim unity stifled, to a large extent, the natural resentment of the Hindus against the undue toleration of Muslim opinion and demands by Gandhi.

Gandhi's faith in the nationalism of the Ali Brothers and their non-violent spirit can only be described as pathetic in character. Instead of honourably extricating himself from his entanglements with them, he descended to activities which were deemed by many at the time to be unworthy of the great leader of the Non-co-operation movement. This feeling is not perhaps fully justified by facts, but as it created a great stir at the moment and there is a good deal of misunderstanding even now on the subject, a brief reference may be made to the incident.

Shortly after Lord Reading assumed charge of his office as Viceroy, he had several interviews with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who suggested the idea that the Viceroy should see Gandhi. Lord Reading told him, "if Mr. Gandhi applied to me for an interview I would readily grant it and I should be glad to hear his views". Gandhi came to Simla at the request of Malaviya and C.F. Andrews, and applied for interview which was readily granted by the Viceroy. There were altogether six interviews between May 13 and 18, 1921, and some of them were very prolonged. This gave rise to various rumours and prophecies, none of

which proved true. There is still a veil of secrecy over the talks between the Vieeroy and Gandhi, and all that was given out was that there was a general talk about the political situation. Only in one respect the interviews led to an important consequence. The Viceroy told Gandhi that some responsible Non-co-operators had made speeches inciting to violence, and as Gandhi denied it, the Viceroy read to Gandhi certain passages from the speeches of Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Gandhi thereupon admitted the charge of the Viceroy and told him that he would advise the Ali Brothers to express publicly their regrets for the unintentional incitement to violence contained in the passages. It was at this stage, *and not before*, that the Viceroy told Gandhi that the Government proposed to institute criminal proceedings against the Ali Brothers for these passages, and if Gandhi showed him the draft of the statement he would recommend to them to issue, and if this statement prove satisfactory, he would prevent the prosecution. The draft was in due course shown by Gandhi to the Viceroy, and some alterations were made at the latter's suggestion. Gandhi left Simla and some days afterwards telegraphed to His Excellency that the Ali Brothers had signed the statement, with an immaterial alteration and sent it to the press for publication. This apology of the Ali brothers, after denial of any intention to incite to violence, ran as follows :

"We therefore sincerely feel sorry and express our regret for the unnecessary heat of some of the passages in these speeches, and we give our public assurance and promise to all who may require it that so long as we are associated with the movement of non-co-operation, we shall not directly or indirectly advocate violence at present or in the future, nor create an atmosphere of preparedness for violence. Indeed, we hold it contrary to the spirit of non-co-operation to which we have pledged our word."

Next day, May 30, the Government issued a communique about it and Lord Reading referred to the whole subject in a speech at the Simla Chelmsford Club dinner. The official circle was very jubilant and the Government report referred with great glee to the fact that "the head and forefront of the campaign for non-co-operation with a 'Satanic Government' actually presented himself to the Viceroy". Feelings ran very high among the Non-co-operators, and a split threatened the Gandhi camp over this matter. It was very galling to their pride that Gandhi should secure pardon for the Ali Brothers by inducing them to give an apology while the rank and file were courting arrest for less violent language. It was also irritating to many that Gandhi should have sought interview with the Viceroy, while carrying on a life and death struggle with the British Government for *Swaraj within a year*, and that again, not for discussing the problem of *Swaraj* or any other fundamental problem, but only a side-issue of a very minor nature and of a personal character. Gandhi defended his action in a long statement. Two important facts are often ignored in judging of Gandhi's action. In the first place, it is clear from the Viceroy's statement that Gandhi was unaware of the Government's decision to prosecute the Ali Brothers when he suggested about public apology. Secondly, Gandhi did discuss with the Viceroy the general political issues, and the episode of Ali Brothers was merely a side-issue. Besides, as Gandhi pointed out, he did not make any bargain, but thought it to be proper for the Ali Brothers to express regret for violence, irrespective of the question whether there was any prosecution or not.[42]

Gandhi might have other motives, too. The apology tendered by the Ali Brothers was calculated to remove, or at least diminish, the growing discontent and sullen resentment of the Hindus about the aims and methods

of the Khilafatists and their leaders, and to convince them that the Khilafatists by abjuring violence showed that they did not cherish any Pan-Islamic sentiment.

There is no doubt, however, that the episode of tendering apology considerably lowered the prestige of both Gandhi and the Ali Brothers, and consequently weakened Non-co-operation movement. The Ali Brothers fully realized this and tried to wriggle out of the position. In his Presidential speech at the Gujarat Provincial Khilafat Conference, held at Broach on June 2, Muhammad Ali denied that he ever had made a violent speech or ever dreamt of bargaining with the Government. He also made it clear that while their present policy coincided with the Mahatma's their creed was not identical, and should Non-co-operation fail to achieve the end, he would exert his right to take up arms against the enemies of Islam. Again, at the Khilafat Conference at Karachi, held on July 8-11, Muhammad Ali referred to the apology in his Presidential address. He said, addressing the audience, "I want you to understand that the apology is meant for you. We can never apologise to the Government." Again he observed that the apology "was meant for Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who entertained fears of an Afghan invasion. It was meant to set at rest the fears of the Pandit. But, as it would seem, it has unfortunately not succeeded." Referring to the public criticism and the Government attitude, he said : "In the eyes of our enemies we are politically extinct to all intents and purposes. We have been represented by the Sircar that having apologized none is prepared to listen to us". He then proved by citing concrete illustrations that his popularity was as great as ever.[43]

Whatever we may think of these pronouncements, the Khilafat Conference at Karachi rehabilitated the Ali

Brothers in their old popularity and prestige. Some time before it a *futwa* was published in the name of five hundred Ulemas (learned Muslim divines) to the effect that all service under a non-Muslim Government was forbidden by Islamic law, and service in the police and the army was stigmatised as a specially heinous sin. In accordance with this view the Karachi Conference passed the following resolution: "This meeting clearly proclaims that it is in every way religiously unlawful for a Mussulman at the present moment to continue in the British army or to induce others to join the army, and it is the duty of all the Mussulmans in general, and the Ulemas in particular, to see that these religious commandments are brought home to every Mussulman in the army."

Muhammad Ali, Shaukat Ali and four other Muslim leaders were arrested in September and tried on the charge of passing the above resolution and circulating the Ulemas' *futwa*, since proscribed, among the Muslim troops.

All the accused were convicted on November 1, and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. As soon as the sentence was passed the Ali Brothers were wildly cheered by a vast crowd that had collected near the court and once more they became popular heroes. But even before the trial was over, public meetings were held all over the country where the Karachi resolution was reiterated and the extracts from the *futwa*, regarding service in the army, were distributed broadcast.[44] Huge meetings were held at Delhi and Lakhnau on September 29 and 30, and in the latter place ten thousand people are said to have sprung to their feet and repeated the whole resolution word for word. Similar meetings were held at Kanpur, Agra, Nagpur, and many other places. Gandhi himself took up the challenge and along with 46 other top-ranking N.C.O.

leaders issued a manifesto on 4 October. They declared it to be "contrary to the national dignity for any Indian to serve as a civilian, and more specially as a soldier under a system of Government which has brought about India's economic, moral and political degradation ......" and that "it is the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government and find some other means of livelihood". Next day, 5th October, the Congress Working Committee, meeting in Bombay, passed a long resolution expressing the same sentiment.[45]

### 5. The Militant Attitude of N.C.O.

It is somewhat surprising that the Government ignored this open defiance. But it was fully aware of the growing strength of the N.C.O. movement, as would be evident from the following remarks in the official report : "The activities of the non-co-operation party redoubled. The number of Khilafat and non-co-operation meetings rose to unprecedented heights, and a steady stream of inflammatory oratory was poured forth. Hostility to Government increased, encouraging the tendency towards general lawlessness. The volunteer movement became more formidable : intimidation was freely practised and the police were molested in the exercise of their duty. The design of erecting an administration parallel to that of Government, which should be ready on the slightest warning to take over the whole regulation of the country, was freely bruited."[46]

How far the allegations of the Government were correct, it is difficult to say, But there is no doubt that the tempo of the Non-co-operation movement rose much higher at this time. "When the Working Committee met at Patna on the 16th August, 1921, the letter of request for permission to start Civil Disobedience of Orders under section 144 from the District of Hardoi in U. P.

was adjourned to the next meeting of the Committee."[47] At its next meeting, held in Calcutta in September (6th, 7th, 8th and 11th), it negatived the idea of Civil Disobedience in any District and Province, and only authorized Civil Disobedience by individuals who might be prevented in the prosecution of the *Swadeshi* propaganda. But the Working Committee and the AICC that met at Delhi after the arrest of Ali Brothers, on November 5, 1921, took a much bolder step. They authorized every Province on its own responsibility to undertake Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, in the manner considered most suitable by the respective Provincial Congress Committees, subject to the following conditions: "Every individual civil resister must have fulfilled the part of the NCO programme applicable to him, should know spinning, must have discarded foreign cloth, taken to Khaddar, must be a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity, believe in non-violence as absolutely essential.........
In regard to mass civil disobedience a district or tahsil should be treated as a unit and therein a majority of the population must have adopted full *Swadeshi* and must be clothed out of cloth hand-spun and hand-woven in that area......No one should expect support out of public funds."[48]

This did not lead to any mass Civil Disobedience, nor was it probably intended. But it shows a striking advance on the road to Civil Disobedience which was destined henceforth to form the chief item in the non-violent campaign against the Government for the attainment of *Swaraj*. The Non-co-operatian movement was only the first stage. The Delhi Resolution may be said to have heralded the beginning of the second.

There is no doubt that the arrest of the Ali Brothers rejuvenated the Non-co-operation movement. Another important factor which contributed to it was the support

which the members of the old revolutionary party in Bengal accorded to it. As this fact is not generally known, the account, as given by Subhas Chandra Bose, may be quoted at some length :

"While opposition to the Mahatma's policy of non-co-operation came from the intellectuals, opposition to his cult of non-violence came from another quarter, namely, the Revolutionary Party. During the Great War, thousands of revolutionaries had been imprisoned and most of them were subsequently released as a result of the amnesty declared in 1919. Many of them did not approve of the doctrine of non-retaliation which they apprehended would demoralise the people and weaken their power of resistance. There was a possibility that the ex-revolutionaries as a class would go against the Congress owing to ideological differences. As a matter of fact, a section of them had already started propaganda in Bengal against the Non-co-operation movement. Strangely enough, funds had been provided by the British mercantile community under the name of the Citizens' Protection League. The money was distributed through the medium of an Indian advocate who did not disclose the source of the funds. Deshabandhu C. R. Das was anxious to disarm the hostility of the ex-revolutionaries and, if possible, to win their active support for the Congress campaign. He therefore arranged a Conference in September between them and the Mahatma, at which he also was present. The ex-revolutionaries had a heart-to-heart talk with the Mahatma, and he and the Deshabandhu tried to convince them that non-violent non-co-operation, instead of weakening or demoralising the people, would strengthen their power of effective resistance The upshot of the Conference was that all those present promised to give a full chance to the Congress to strive for Swaraj and promised to do nothing to hamper its work, while many of them agreed

to join the Congress organisation as loyal and active members."[49]

Bose adds that this Conference took place behind closed doors in September, 1921, when the Mahatma and other members of the Congress Working Committee were staying in Calcutta as guests of C.R.Das. As Bose speaks of the Conference from his own personal knowledge, there is no reason to disbelieve his account which is corroborated by the statements of several ex-revolutionaries and their practical conduct mentioned in Chapter VII.

6. Boycott of the Prince of Wales.

Though the arrest of Ali Brothers and the subsequent episode caused a great sensation, generally speaking, the Non-co-operation Movement did not, so far, arouse any great excitement, or lead to any such open coflict between the Government and the people as many anticipated. The youthful Subhas Bose, who had thrown himself whole-heartedly into the movement immediately after his return to India in July, 1921, records in his autobiography that the youths of Bengal rather felt damped in spirit at the tameness of the whole show and were 'spoiling for a fight', but no opportunity presented itself. The visit of the Prince of Wales to India in November, 1921, however, offered such an opportunity.

It was originally proposed that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales would formally inaugurate the new legislatures in India, both Central and Local, constituted under the Reforms Scheme of 1919. But as he had not yet completely recovered from labours of his Dominion tour, His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught, was appointed by His Majesty to discharge the task. But it was announced at the September session of the Legislative Assembly that the Prince will visit India in November. The Indian public generally interpreted such royal

visit as an attempt to exploit the traditional sentiments of India, and the view was generally held that the visit was deliberately planned as a counterpoise to the Non-co-operation movement with a view to conciliating a large section of the people and rallying it to the support of the Government. To allay such suspicion the Viceroy went out of his way to make the following observations: "The Prince of Wales will come to India on this occasion as the son of the King-Emperor and as the Heir to the Throne, not as the representative of any Government or to promote the interests of any political party". On another occasion Lord Reading emphatically repudiated the allegations that the Prince was coming to serve some political end and assured the Indian people: "Neither I nor my Government have ever had the faintest intention of using His Royal Highness' visit for political purposes."

The Congress was not satisfied with these assurances and strongly condemned the exploitation of the Royal family for political ends. Its view is thus summed up in the Enquiry Commitee's Report: "Every child in the country knew that the visit of H. R. H. was originally intended to give a start to the working of the new Reforms wich the country had refused to accept...After this it was but natural to apprehend that the Prince would be called upon, in the course of his visit, to give his Royal Blessing to these very highly controversial reforms, an apprehension which subsequent events fully justified". Urged by such considerations the All-India Congress Committe meeting at Bombay on July 28, 1921, decided to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales. It passed a resolution to the effect, "that it is the duty of everyone to refrain from participating in or assisting any welcome to His Royal Highness or any functions organized officially or otherwise in connection

with his visit". To this was added the following: "While the AICC considers it its painful duty to tender the above advice to the people, it desires to place on record its opinion that India bears no sort of ill-feeling against the person of His Royal Highness, and that this advice is tendered because the Committee regards the proposed visit as a political move and calculated to give strength and support to a systen of Government......that is designed to keep India as long as possible from her birthright of Swaraj". The Congress party publicly declared that by this step they meant no insult to the Prince, and Gandhi elaborated the idea in an article entitled "Honour the Prince" in his journal *Young India* of October 27, 1921.

According to the official report Lord Reading's explanation regarding the visit of the Prince was unnecessary so far as the larger portion of the Indian people were concerned, as considerable enthusiasm prevailed among them. This, like most of the detailed statements about the 'successful' (?) tour of the Prince, as given in the official report, is inaccurate and misleading. It is worthy of note that even the leading politicians of the Moderate Party opposed the idea of the visit of the Prince. The veteran leader, Srinivasa Sastri, told the Liberal Conference at Bombay that "he did not think there was anyone there who desired it most enthusiastically. He certainly did not. He counselled against the visit as long as he could."

The boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit followed the same pattern as that of the Duke of Connaught. Some Municipalities like those of Bombay and Calcutta presented Addresses but the Lahore Municipal Committee refused to do so. There were usual receptions with pomp and grandeur in one part of every city he visited, while, there was *hartal* in the other parts. A very disgraceful scene

was enacted in Calcutta owing to the indiscretion of some overzealous loyalists. The Sheriff of Calcutta summoned a public meeting on 4 August to discuss the question of according a public reception to the Prince. It was announced that the meeting would be held at the Dalhousie Institute under the Chairmanship of the Governor. The Non-co-operators took up the challenge and mustered strong at the Dalhousie Insitute. Long before the appointed time the hall was full. In view of this situation the venue of the Sheriff's meeting was shifted without any public notice to the Town Hall. As the Sheriff did not turn up at the Dalhousie Institute where the meeting was announced to be held, C. R. Das was voted to the Chair and a resolution was passed to the effect that "no reception should be accorded to the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit here".

In the meanwhile the Sheriff held the meeting at the Town Hall whose approaches were guarded by European and Indian Police armed with *lathis*, and a detachment of the Gurkha military police was stationed on the portico. In spite of this police cordon shutting out the people from the meeting, nearly thousand persons collected outside the building to witness the '*purdah* party' as they called it, and disturbed the work of the meeting by a regular fusillade of cat-calls, howling, shouting aad jeering. In the midst of all these the '*purdah*' meeting adopted a resolution to accord a hearty welcome to the Prince, and a committee was appointed with the Governor as Chairman to organizse the reception. Such was the genesis of the 'cordial public reception' which was given to the Prince in Calcutta.

The Prince of Wales landed in Bombay on November 17, at about 10 A. M. He was welcomed by the Viceroy, officials, and a large number of Ruling Chiefs, leading businessmen and landed aristocrats. After he read the

King's message, he was presented with the Municipal Address. After this function was over the Prince drove in state to the Government House, and the Royal procession was lustily cheered by a crowd of sightseers, mainly composed of Europeans, Eurasians, Parsis, and the wealthy residents of Bombay.

In accordance with the resolution of the Working Committee of the Congress to observe *hartal* on that day all over India, a huge public meeting was held at the opposite end of the town. During the morning the tramcars were running and the mills were working. Within a few hours, however, all this stopped, and swelling crowds rushed into the streets. They declared *hartal* and joined the boycott meeting at the beach which was addressed by Gandhi, and a huge bonfire was made of a pile of foreign cloth. The mill-hands came out and began hooliganism of all kinds. Other people joined them, and a swelling mob was molesting the peaceful passengers in the tramcars and held up the tram traffic. Their special wrath fell upon those who had joined or gone to witness the royal procession. The mob forcibly removed their foreign caps and head-dresses, pelted Europeans, and burnt tramcars, a motor and several liquor shops. Some Parsi women were roughly handled and had their *saris* torn from them. In some quarters every passer-by with a foreign cap was molested, and even beaten, if he refused to give up the cap.

The orgy of the mob is thus described by Gandhi himself: "The crowd did not consist of hooligans or only of boys. It was not an unintelligent crowd. They were not all mill-hands. It was essentially a mixed crowd, unprepared and unwilling to listen to anybody. For the moment it had lost its head, and it was not a crowd but several crowds numbering in all less than twenty thusand. It was bent upon mischief and destruction."

Soon there was police firing and the Anglo-Indian and Parsi quarters took revenge upon those wearing *khaddar.* Many congress volunteers were seriously injured. The following is a contemporary description : "For full five days the riot went on. There were Parsi mob in the Parsi quarter, Moslem mob in the Moslem quarter, Christian and Anglo-Indian mob in their own quarter, and, to crown all, the monster mob of mill-hands in the mill quarter of the town.........The Parsis, infuriated at the treatment of their women and children, came out in the streets armed with guns, *lathis* and bamboos, and belaboured whoever came in their way—not excepting their own kinsmen who happened to have khaddar and Gandhi cap on. Europeans and the Jews also took the law into their own hands...and mercilessly injured Hindu and Muslim passers-by. As a result there was another mob-rising which was quickly quelled by military and police fire. Several grog-shops were burnt, a Parsi temple was set fire to, and immense damage was done to shops. Eminent Indian leaders, who had gone out to pacify the fighting mobs, were badly molested by the Parsis and Anglo-Indians. The casualties were heavy. According to official report 53 persons were killed and about 400 were wounded". But, as Gandhi pointed out, "of the 53 persons who lost their lives, over 45 were Non-co-operators or their sympathisers—the hooligans ; and of the 400 wounded, to be absolutely on the safe side, over 350 were also derived from the same class".[50]

Gandhi was deeply mortified at the incidents of Bombay. He violently denounced the rioters and vowed to abstain from food till the violence stopped. He remarked : "With non-violence on our lips we have terrorised those who happened to differ from us. The *swaraj* that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils." As a result of this ugly riot

Gandhi suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement which was to be launched at Bardoli on 23 November.

Generally speaking, the *hartal* was successfully observed all over India on November 17, and passed off quietly everywhere except at Bombay. Calcutta witnessed a strange scene. It looked like a deserted city. Here is a contemporary account : "All Indian shops, bazars, markets, including the great business quarters were closed. There was no tram or any sort of vehicular traffic in the streets...All mills were closed. The European business offices had to stop work owing to the absence of the Indian staff. The Courts, including the High Court and Government offices, had similarly to close down. The Railway stations and their goods-sheds were deserted ......The municipal-hands, the sweepers, scavengers, gas-lighters all struck work. In the European quarters European residents themselves lighted some of the lamps, and it was an interesting sight to see the sahibs running with the ladders on their backs. Not a single case of riot, street-brawl, or even ordinary crime was reported. The volunteers with folded hands requested everybody not to make any disturbance".[51]

The extraordinary success of the peaceful *hartal* so much unnerved the English community that the Bengal Chamber of Commerce addressed a letter to the Government of Bengal the very next day, drawing their attention to the seriousness of the situation. As this letter gives a graphic picture of a political *hartal*—which was to be a very common feature in India in near future—and its reaction upon the British, a somewhat long extract from it is quoted below :

"In order to understand", they said, "how successful the movement was, its leading features must be surveyed. In the first place, the means of locomotion were paralysed. No tram-cars "ticca gharries" or rickshaws were allowed

to run, and practically no taxi-cabs. Office gharries could not be utilised. Private motor-cars were interfered with, and many drivers dragged from their seats even in the European quarters of the city. Industrial labour went on strike for the day......The Municipal Services collapsed. The streets were unswept and the dustbins remained unemptied. The shopkeepers were afraid to open their shops; attempts were made to prevent children going to schools; and even the police courts were closed. At night, the gas lamps were dim and streets were deserted ......The success of their (that is, of the volunteers') exertions must, of necessity, encourage the leaders of the movement to redouble their efforts. What is possible for one day is possible for more than one. Indeed, there seems no reason to doubt that this is merely a trial of strength, preparatory to the proclamation and organisation of a complete HARTAL to be observed for the week during which His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales will be in Calcutta.........The position of the movement is that the people are rapidly losing, if they have not already lost, all confidence in the Government established by law in the city. They are being systematically taught that the Government has passed away, and that another Government has been set up in its place; and this doctrine they are accepting and acting upon."[52]

The two English *dailies* in Calcutta, the *Statesman* and the *Englishman*, also wrote in the same strain. They remarked that the Congress volunteers had taken possession of the city of Calcutta and the Government had abdicated ; and demanded immediate and drastic action against the Volunteers.

### 7. Repressive Measures of the Government

The loud outcry of the Englishmen had the desired effect. The Government issued a notification within

twenty-four hours, declaring the Congress and Khilafat volunteer organization as unlawful. A week later proclamations were issued suppressing all public assemblies and processions for three months in Calcutta and some important towns. Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal, threatened to take more drastic steps if these measures proved inadequate, and many other Provincial Governments followed suit.

The fact is that the complete *hartal* that greeted the arrival of the Prince of Wales in India radically changed the policy of the Government of India. This is clearly explained in the Telegraph of the Viceroy referred to above :

" A new and dangerous situation confronted Government after the events of the 17th November. An increasing disregard for lawful authority and the growth of a dangerous spirit of lawlessness had been engendered by the outbreaks of the last few months, and it had become evident that a systematic campaign of violence, intimidation and obstruction had been embarked on by many of the Volunteer Associations, to combat which it had proved ineffective to proceed under the ordinary criminal law. In many places these associations were at first recruited from educated classes, but as the campaign became more violent, they began to draw adherents from unemployed labourers, mill-hands and city rabble, many of whom were paid for their service. Government decided in these circumstances that measures of more comprehensive and drastic character should be resorted to, and information was sent to the Local Governments that sanction would be given to the application of the Seditious Meetings Act in any district where it was considered necessary to adopt that course. Instructions were also given to them that vigorous use should be made of the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, Part II,

for combating the Volunteer Association's illegal activities, and that troops should be employed more freely, both in order to reinforce the police and to hearten and encourage all law-abiding citizens, and the measures to be taken in the event of civil disobedience being inaugurated were laid down. Provincial Governments were assured of the full support of the Government of India in checking disorder, while the formation of armed Police battalions and the extensive enrolment of special constables was suggested. In particular, they were informed that they should not hesitate to prosecute any offenders against the ordinary law, however prominent their position, whose arrest and prosecution was in their opinion required for the maintenance of authority......Action was promptly taken by practically all local Governments in Northern India, in accordance with these instructions. The Seditious Meetings Act was introduced in most of the seriously affected districts in the Punjab, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, and Burma. In some provinces the various Associations had been declared as unlawful, under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, a few days before the receipt of our instructions. and certain other Provinces have now issued similar proclamations. A large number of persons have also been arrested and convicted under that Act and other enactments for preservation of law and order. At the same time prosecutions were more freely instituted against newspapers, leaders and speakers who had incited to violence."

It is thus obvious that the Government of India was determined to suppress, by force, the movement to boycott the Prince of Wales. Thus was kindled the flame which lay in embers nearly throughout the year. At last, after eleven months of inactivity, comparatively speaking, the Government declared open war against the Non-co-operators, and the whole of India watched with

a thrill the results of the first encounter between the armed might of the powerful British Government and the Non-violent Non-co-operation or Passive Resistance.

Calcutta proved to be the most sensational theatre of war, and an account of it is given by young Subhas Bose, who took an active part in organizing the boycott. Referring to the notifications issued by the Government of Bengal declaring volunteer organization etc. illegal, he writes : "We had been spoiling for a fight in Calcutta and the official notification therefore was thrice welcome to us. The general opinion was in favour of an immediate reply to the official challenge."[53] But the leader, C. R. Das, did not like to take any precipitate action. After ascertaining the views of different district organizations, a meeting of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee was called and held *in camera* towards the end of November, 1921. The Committee unanimously decided to start civil disobedience and vested all its powers in Das, thus making him a Dictator both in law as well as in fact. He decided to begin by sending out batches of five volunteers who would proceed quietly to sell *Khadi* cloth. Das issued a stirring appeal for volunteers who would thus defy the official ban and take all the consequences. As the response at the outset was not quite satisfactory, Das decided to send his only son, Chiraranjan, and his wife Basanti Devi as volunteers, in order to set an example to others. As soon as the son was arrested, the number of volunteers who offered their services was increased. But still, against the unanimous remonstrances of all his followers, Das sent his wife the next day with a batch of volunteers including two other ladies. As soon as the news spread that Mrs. Das was taken to prison with the other ladies, there was wild excitement in Calcutta and men and women began to pour in as volunteers. In the meanwhile Mrs. Das had been

taken to the Police Station ; but as she was stepping into the prison van, Police Constables "came up to her and vowed that they were going to resign their jobs the same day." There was also a sensation at a dinner party in the Government House, Calcutta. Mr. S. N. Mallik, a leading member of the Liberal Party, one of the invited guests, left the party as a protest as soon as he heard the news of the arrest of Mrs. Das. The excitement grew so tense all over the city of Calcutta that at midnight the Government ordered the release of Mrs. Das and her associates and gave out that they had been arrested through mistake.

But it was too late; the shrewd device of Das was crowned with complete success. From the next day thousands began to enlist as volunteers. The number of volunteers increased rapidly beyond all expectation or calculation, and everyone of them was eager to court arrest. Within a few days the two big prisons in Calcutta were filled with political prisoners. Camp-prisons were then opened, but they too were filled in no time. The British jail had lost its terror and imprisonment became a badge of distinction. As this was the most marked characteristic of the N. C. O. movement and became a permanent feature of the national struggle in future, some actual details may be given in the words of Subhas Bose.

"As more people were arrested the prison-administration became more unmanageable. Orders were given for the release of a large number of political prisoners, but no one would leave the prison, and moreover, it was impossible to identify them. Sometimes they would be taken to the prison office on the pretext of being transferred to some other prison or of being interviewed by their relatives and there they would be set free. When this trick was discovered, no prisoner would leave

his cell when called by a prison-official. Prisoners were thereupon taken forcibly to the prison-gate and set at liberty. Outside prison, tactics were changed. Arrests were stopped and orders were given that sticks and batons should be used freely by the police in dealing with crowd and demonstrators. In some cases demonstrators were removed in police-vans to out-of-the-way places thirty miles from the city and there asked to walk back home. A liberal use was also made of the hose in order to give the demonstrators free cold baths in winter."[54]

The Prince of Wales was due to arrive in Calcutta on 24 December. Lord Ronaldshay was not insensible to the gravity of the local situation, and did not like to throw the whole city into a violent turmoil during the Prince's visit. That is probably the reason why he did not take to more violent measures at the time, and even opened negotiations with Das. He proposed to withdraw the repressive measures if he called off the boycott of the Prince. Das pointed out that the boycott was proclaimed by the Congress and could only be lifted by that body. On December 10, Das followed the old tactics for stimulating the agitation. He himself went out as a volunteer and was arrested. This was followed by the arrest of all the prominent leaders of Khilafat and Congress organizations who were in Calcutta. The Government now showed its mailed fist. To overawe the people the British soldiers were posted in different quarters of the city.

This repressive policy was not confined to Calcutta, but was followed with relentless vigour in other Provinces where trouble was brewing or apprehended. Leaders like Motilal Nehru and Lajpat Rai were arrested and put in prison. The scene of Bengal was repeated. People came out in open defiance of Govern-

ment orders and courted arrest. A wave of unprecedented enthusiasm swept over the country and within a month twenty-five thousand people were put in prison.

8. Reaction against Government Policy

There is no doubt that the Government were hustled into this repressive campaign, partly by the pressure brought to bear upon them by the non-official European opinion, and partly, perhaps mainly, by the unprecedented situation with which they were faced. No Government could possibly tolerate an open defiance of its authority by an organized movement spreading over the whole country. The disrespect shown to the Prince of Wales was also a grave cause of offence, as it made the Government of India look small in the eyes of the Home Government and the world at large. The riot at Bombay was also a grave warning to those who were responsible for maintaining law and order in the country. The Government could be hardly blamed if they regarded the Non-co-operation movement, as it emerged in November 1921, as an incipient revolt on the part of a large section of the people. On the face of it, therefore, the Government had every right to consider itself justified in taking the extraordinary measures which, in their view, were forced upon them. But what the Government failed to realize was the national character of the revolt, and that the real remedy was not the suppression of the disorders which were merely outward symbols, but to eradicate the root cause by generous concessions to the demands for freedom. This is a lesson which the history of every age and every country has taught, but which no Government has ever taken to heart. Another great lesson which was ignored by the Government of India, like all others, is that repression, however necessary or justified, merely helps the cause

of the revolution ; the blood of the martyr has always proved the seeds of the church. There is therefore nothing to be surprised at the fact that the campaign of repression launched by the Government in place of the cautious policy they had hitherto pursued produced an effect very much the opposite of what was expected. It did not crush the spirit of revolt, but served to widen still more the breach between them and the people. Even the Moderates who had hitherto been their staunch supporters wavered in their loyalty and showed a sullen spirit of resentment and revulsion. The Official Report attaches special significance to this phenomenon, and gives an admirable analysis of the various factors that were working upon their minds. But, as usual, the Government refused to learn the obvious lessons and shape their policy accordingly. But this analysis is important enough to be quoted at some length in order to give a real picture of the effect of the action of the Government upon the people at large, including the loyal element : "But amongst the first effects of the action taken by Government against the volunteers was the arrest of a considerable number of high-minded and much respected persons who were believed by many Indians to be animated by motives of disinterested patriotism. The prosecution and conviction both of these people and of a number of immature and misguided students led to a disappointing revulsion on the part of moderate sentiment. Further, the Seditious Meetings Act falls within the category of those enactments which Indian opinion stigmatises as 'repressive' ; and its application, even in the circumstances already related, gave rise to uneasiness. There became manifest a noticeable inclination to represent the new policy as an interference, for political purposes, with the rights of freedom of speech and of freedom of association ;

and on this ground a disposition was shown to make common cause with the extremists in attacking Government.......In part, also, it seems to have been due to sympathy for high-minded, if mistaken people, who were the earliest victims of the majesty of the law ; and in part, to a general belief that the powers now employed by the Executive were being misused in an oppressive manner by subordinates."[55]

The Government version indicates, but does not adequately describe, the righteous indignation felt by the Moderates and loyal sections of the people who had hitherto supported the Government. It is therefore necessary to refer to a few facts illustrating their feelings :

1. On December 10, 1921, Mr. Raza Ali, a member of the Council of State, sent a long telegram to the Viceroy, emphatically protesting against the Government's new policy. "Indiscriminate arrests and incarceration of men like Matilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai, Mrs. Das, and others, he pointed out, are helping to prove the claim of the Non-co-operators "that the only place for an honest Indian is gaol." "Courageous men who have not hesitated to part company with Mr. Gandhi cannot be expected to acquiesce in a reign of terror being established by the Government.........One can understand Government's efforts to put down intimidation and actual or apprehended violence, but recent events indicate the Government's desire to strike at the Congress and the peaceful part of its propaganda. The new policy, it is my duty to state, will be met with opposition by united India. How can any self-respecting Indian stay at home when our ladies are being put under lock and key in the name of law and order ?

2. On December 15, the Lucknow Liberal League wired to the Viceroy a series of resolutions beginning with the following : "The Lucknow Liberal League views with great alarm the new policy of the Government in pursuance

of which volunteers and similar organisations of the Congress and Khilafat have been declared unlawful and strongly disapproves of the wholesale and indiscriminate arrests and imprisonment that are taking place in the name of law and order."

3. On December 18, the President of the Madras Liberal League, Sir Sivaswami Aiyar, wired to the Viceroy to the same effect.

4. The National Liberal League, the paity to which the Ministers belonged, sent a memorial to the Viceroy complaining of the manner in which the Military and the Police behaved in the streets of Calcutta which caused wide-spread discontent among the citizens, many of whom badly suffered in their hands. Strong objection was also taken to the way in which the law was administered by the Magistracy and the Police and of the atrocious beating of undertrial prisoners.

5. The Indian Association of Calcutta, the central organization of the Bengal Moderates, also made two strong protests to the Viceroy to which reference will be made later.

The session of the Bengal Legislative Council on December 19, 1921, gave an opportunity to both the Government and the Moderate and loyal elements to express their views on the current political situation. The Governor, who personally addressed the Council, made an open offer that the Government would "stay their hand" if the boycott of the Prince were withdrawn. Mr. S. N. Mallik, a prominent Moderate leader, who had been a member of the Council of the Secretary of State, moved the adjournment of the House to consider the grave political situation, and made a vigorous protest against the repressive policy of the Government. The following extracts from his speech would give some idea of his vehement denunciation :

"The whole province is in a state of terrorism...... crude weapons of coercion have been put into use for the purpose of commanding the love and affection of the people......The methods of putting into execution these repressive measures have taken away the breath even from the most peaceful and law-abiding of citizens... Repression has taken such a cruel shape that I have every reason to believe that the Indian element in the Government has not been consulted by the bureaucraey in such a vital matter, thus violating the spirit of the new Reforms. Our disapproval here cannot but take the shape of the utmost possible condemnation. Unprovoked assaults, unjustifiable insults, indiscriminate arrests are the outstanding features of this period of oppression. Still more objectionable have been the trials *in camera* and in jail and the harsh sentences ...persons even after their arrest have been subjected to unnecessary harshness and cowardly assault. These things have......laid Government open to the charge of vindictiveness in their doings.

"On the top of these, the wantonly mischievous activities of the Military and the intolerable aggressiveness of the Police have put the severest strain upon the loyalty of the most devoted Moderate and have made him look aghast. Whatever Government communiques may say, I have the evidence of my own eyes which I cannot disbelieve. I have seen the Military charging, insulting and assaulting innocent passers-by in the streets with an exuberance of animalism—characteristic of their profession—intensified by the hauteur of a supposed racial and a certain physical superiority. Even respectable persons, regarding whom there could be possibly no honest mistake, were not saved from humiliation and assault at the hands of the Police and the Military."

### 9. Efforts for Peaceful Settlement

The disaffection of tne Moderates must have created a deep impression upon Lord Reading. The position was brought home to him in a more personal way. He arrived at Calcutta about a week before the date of the Prince's arrival in the city, and must have been mortified to learn that the banquet which the Calcutta Bar had arranged in his honour as ex-Lord Chief Justice of England was cancelled on account of the arrest of C.R.Das. The day of the Prince's visit was drawing near and there were clear signs as to the sort of welcome he would receive in Calcutta. The whole outlook was gloomy indeed. The Non-co-operation movement was attaining greater and greater dimensions, and there were various other disturbing factors such as the Akali movement and the Moplah rebellion. Parhaps all these made him eager, or at least willing, to arrive, if possible, at a settlement with the Congress. Unfortunately, a veil of secrecy still surrounds the negotiations that were carried on for this purpose during that fateful week. According to the official Report, "it was urged by many of the leaders of Moderate opinion that a Round Table Conference should be held at which Government should be represented and all shades of public opinion, in order that some solution might be found of the situation through the means of some act of constructive statesmanship, and a deputation waited on the Viceroy for this purpose in Calcutta on December, 21." The Viceroy insisted upon "discontinuance of the unlawful activities of the Non-co-operation party as a fundamental condition which should precede the discussion of any question of a conference". The Telegraph of the Viceroy, from which the above is taken, leaves the topic at that, but the official Report adds a few more details.

We are told that when the suggestion was first made about the Round Table Conference on December 21, by a Deputation headed by Pandit Malaviya, Lord Reading made it quite plain that nothing could be done until the Non-co-operation party discontinued open breaches of the law and the practice of intimidation ; but he did not discourage efforts which were so plainly well-intentioned. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and the other would-be peace-makers then found that it was Mr. Gandhi who was adamant. He demanded, as a preliminary to any conference, the withdrawal of the recent prescription of the Volunteer organizations and the release of all persons,—including the Ali Brothers, recently convicted for what he described as non-violent activities. Accordingly, the Deputation which met the Viceroy on 21 December could not offer anything on behalf of the Non-co-operators which the Government could accept. But the Government version does not perhaps contain the whole truth. There are good grounds to believe that Lord Reading made a serious attempt to come to an understanding with C. R. Das. There is no doubt that negotiations for a settlement were carried on with Das by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, but whether the latter acted as an emissary of the Government or took the initiative himself, is not quite clear. The following account given by Subhas Bose seems to be fairly authentic, as he was himself in prison along with C. R. Das at the time. Bose writes that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who had kept away from the 1921 movement, "came to interview Deshabandhu Das in the Presidency jail with a message from the Viceroy", thus clearly implying that it was the Viceroy who took the initiative. The rest may be stated in Bose's own words :

"The offer that he ( Malaviya ) brought was that if the Congress agreed to call off the civil disobedi-

ence movement immediately, so that the Prince's visit would not be boycotted by the public, the Government would simultaneously withdraw the notification declaring Congress volunteers illegal and release all those who had been incarcerated thereunder. They would further summon a Round Table Conference of the Government and the Congress to settle the future constitution of India.

"The leader ( Das ) had a lon discussion with Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, the outstanding Moslem leader of Calcutta, and with Pandit Malaviya. Some other points had to be decided, including the question of the release of the Ali brothers and their associates, who had been sentenced to two years' hard labour at Karachi in September. On this point the official reply was that since they had not been sentenced in connection with the civil disobedience movement, the Congress should not press for their release as a part of the terms of settlement. But the Viceroy was prepared to give an assurance that they would actually be released in due course. When Deshabandhu Das broached the subject to us and asked for our opinion, the younger section, including myself, vehemently opposed the idea of an armistice on those terms. Thereupon he entered into an elaborate discussion with us and advanced the following arguments in support of his contention that a compromise should be made at once. Rightly or wrongly, he said, the Mahatma had promised *Swaraj* within one year. That year was drawing to a close. Barely a fortnight was left and within this short period something had to be achieved in order to save the face of the Congress and fulfil the Mahatma's promise regarding *Swaraj*. The offer of the Viceroy had come to him as a godsend. If a settlement was made before December 31st and all the political prisoners were released, it would

appear to the popular imagination as a great triumph for the Congress. The Round Table Conference might or might not be a success, but if it failed, and the Government refused to concede the popular demands—the Congress could resume the fight at any time, and when it did so, it would command greater prestige and public confidence.

"The above logic was irrefutable and I felt convinced. Under the joint signatures of Deshabandhu Das and Maulana Azad a telegram was sent to Mahatma Gandhi recommending his acceptance of the proposed terms of settlement. A reply came to the effect that he insisted on the release of the Ali Brothers and their associates as a part of the terms of settlement and also on an announcement regarding the date and composition of the Round Table Conference. Unfortunately, the Viceroy was not in a mood for any further parleying and wanted an immediate decision. All that the Deshabandhu could do in the circumstances was to send for his friends who were then outside prison and urge upon them that they should use all possible means to get the Mahatma to agree. These friends did so and many telegrams passed between Calcutta and Sabarmati. Ultimately the Mahatma did come round, but by then it was too late. The Government of India, tired of waiting, had changed their mind. The Deshabandhu was beside himself with anger and disgust. The chance of a lifetime, he said, had been lost. The feeling among the political prisoners, as also among the Congress rank and file, was that the Mahatma had committed a serious blunder. Only a minority, who had blind faith in him, refused to pass any judgement."[56]

The circumstantial character of the whole narrative leaves no doubt of its substantial authenticity. The reasoning of C. R. Das would also appear very strong indeed. It is not, however, quite so clear whether the whole

thing had been put so logically or in such a lucid form before Gandhi. All his trusted lieutenants and advisers, who might have influenced his decision, were clapped in prison. So a terrible responsibility was thrust upon Gandhi's shoulders, and he was comparatively new in politics. His insistence on the release of Ali Brothers and their associates, after the assurance given by the Viceroy, was ungenerous and tactless, and can only be accounted for by his undue and over-zealous solicitude for keeping the Muslims well in hand. As regards the date and composition of the Round Table Conference Gandhi's insistence cannot altogether be brushed aside as impolitic, at least as a step in the negotiating stage, but this should not have created an insurmountable difficulty. Unfortunately, the telegraphic correspondence between Das and Gandhi is not available and it is not possible to form a final judgment on the conduct of the latter. But there is no doubt that it was a great blunder to close the door of the negotiation on this score, and Gandhi should have left a great deal of latitude to Das, subject to his own general views. He does not *seem* to have done this until at a very late stage, and, if this is true, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Gandhi was guilty of a grave error of judgment.

Before concluding this section it is necessary to refer to the so-called changed attitude of the Moderates towards the campaign of repression launched by the Government. Their early reaction has been mentioned above. According to the official report, the uncompromising attitude of Gandhi to the project of a Round Table Conference and the conciliatory speech of the Viceroy to the deputation that waited on him for this purpose on December 21 "exercised a steadying effect on Moderate opinion",[57] and they supported and endorsed the Government policy. This is not, however, a fair inference from

the resolutions passed at the annual meeting of the All-India Liberal Federation at Allahabad. This is evident from the following which forms a part of the Resolution No. 7 :

"But it views with great concern the inauguration of a policy of indiscriminate arrest and extensive application of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and is strongly of opinion that such a policy defeats its own object by alienating popular sympathy and aggravating general unrest. It also draws pointed attention to the fact that some local Governments and local authorities have acted with an excess of zeal and want of discretion in the matter of arrests, and with harshness and severity in regard to sentences, of which the Federation strongly disapproves, and the Federation therefore strongly urges on the Government an immediate reconsideration of its policy in order to ease the present situation."

It is true that the Federation, which met two days after the Ahmadabad Congress, strongly condemned the proposed campaign of Civil Disobedience and earnestly appealed to the country not to follow a course which was fraught with peril and bound to lead to a deplorable set-back in the progress of the country. But this view was held by the Liberals from the very beginning and does not indicate any new change of policy in favour of the Government.

## V. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

### 1. Ahmadabad Congress

Shortly after the failure of the negotiations, the annual session of the Congress was held in December, 1921, at Ahmadabad. As nearly 40,000 Congress workers were in jail, the session was attended by only 4,726 delegates as against 14,583 at Nagpur, a year ago. C. R. Das, the President-elect of the session, was in jail, and

so Hakim Ajmal Khan presided. Das had already written a portion of his Presidential Address, and this was printed and distributed at the meeting. In his undelivered Address Das showed the 'hollowness of the Reforms Scheme which does not secure to the subject even the elementary rights which are possessed by every citizen under any civilised government.' He expounded the meaning and philosophy of Non-co-operation, and, challenging the view that it was a doctrine of negation, declared : "We break in order to build, we destroy in order to construct; we reject in order to accept." Referring to the disturbances in Bombay, he said : "Bloodshed and disorder have been associated with every great movement, that has taken place, the spread of Christianity for instance...... the fact that disturbances have taken place is no argument against the essential truth of our movement. We must meet the situation with courage and devise means to prevent the recurrence of those disturbances ; but I cannot and will not advise you to stay your hand from the Non-co-operation movement."

The main resolution adopted by the Congress was a fairly long one and consisted of several parts. It contained a review of the work of the past year and an enunciation of programme for the next. It claimed that by reason of the adoption of Non-violent Non-co-operation, the country has made great advance in fearlessness, self-sacrifice, and self-respect, that the movement "has greatly damaged the prestige of the Government," and that "the country is rapidly progressing towards *Swaraj.*" After urging therefore to continue the movement with greater vigour in such a manner as each province may determine, it 'appeals to all the students of the age of 18 and over, to become members of the Volunteer Organisations by signing the required pledge ( which is reproduced ) and to offer themselves for arrest.' It also

'advised all Congress workers and others...to organise individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence and otherwise, in terms of the resolution thereon of the AICC at Delhi ; in order to concentrate attention upon it all other Congress activities should be suspended to the extent it is necessary for this purpose.'

In view of the wholesale arrest of Congress leaders and workers the resolution provided for a possible contingency by appointing "Mahatma Gandhi as the sole Executive authority of the Congress...with the power to appoint a successor in emergency."

This resolution and the proceedings of the Congress leave no doubt that, far from being cowed down by the repressive measures of the Government, it was still on the war path and decided to carry on the struggle with unabated zeal and greater daring, resorting to mass civil disobedience, if necessary. An interesting interlude was provided by the resolution moved by Maulana Hasrat Mohani that complete independence should be adopted as the goal of the Congress. His impassioned eloquence profoundly moved the audience and it seemed as if the resolution would be carried. But Gandhi stood firmly against it and it was rejected.

## 2. Reactionary Attitude of the Viceroy

The rejection of Hasrat Mohani's resolution and the resolution passed by the Congress deploring the riots at Bombay on November 17 and the following days, led the Government of India to believe that Gandhi's views have changed for the better. They telegraphed to the Secretary of State : "The resolutions of the Congress gave evidence of this, since they not only rejected the proposals which the extreme wing of

the Khilafat Party had advanced for abandoning the policy of non-violence, but, whilst the organization of civil disobedience when fulfilment of the Delhi conditions had taken place was urged in them, omitted any reference to the non-payment of taxes, and were worded in such a way as to suggest that for the present civil disobedience would be restricted to defiance of the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act directed against unlawful associations." It was perhaps this feeling which prompted the Viceroy to reject the peaceful gestures of Gandhi.

Undeterred by the failure of his negotiations with C.R. Das mentioned above, Pandit Malaviya and others continued their efforts for a Round Table Conference, as they were particularly anxious to avoid the mass civil disobedience which the Ahmadabad Congress had decided upon. Pandit Malaviya and a few others issued a letter, in response to which about 300 eminent Indians, representing all shades of political opinion outside the Congress fold, met in political conference at Bombay on 14th January, 1922, in order to formulate terms upon which it would be possible to hold a Round Table Conference with Government. Although the Subjects-Committee of the Ahmadabad Congress rejected the proposal of such a conference, Gandhi not only attended the Bombay Conference, but induced the Working Committee to accept its recommendations by which the Congress agreed to suspend *hartal*, picketing and civil disobedience in case the Government agreed to withdraw the notifications under the Criminal Law Amendment Act and Seditious Meetings Act, release the persons convicted thereunder, and to submit to an arbitration committee the cases of other persons convicted under the ordinary law of the land. As the Viceroy told the deputation that waited upon him on December 21, 1921, that the discontinuance of the unlawful activi-

ties of the Non-co-operation party must be a fundamental condition precedent to the holding of a Round Table Conference, the political leaders assembled at the Conference at Bombay as well as Gandhi had every reason to believe that the decision of the Working Committee to accept the recommendations of the Bombay Conference had removed the difficulties in the way of a Round Table Conference. The Viceroy, however, thought otherwise, and rejected the idea of a Round Table Conference on the ground that "there was no suggestion that any of the illegal activities of the non-co-operators other than *hartals*, picketing and civil disobedience should cease." On January 26, the Private Secretary to the Viceroy wrote in reply to the letter of the Conference that "His Excellency was unable to discover in them (the proposals of the Conference) the basis for a profitable discussion in a Round Table Conference, and no useful purpose would be served by entering into any detailed examination of their terms." No unprejudiced man would deny the force of the contention of Gandhi that the terms agreed to by the Congress Working Committee "were quite in keeping" with the requirements of the Viceroy, as enunciated by him in his earlier speeches. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the earlier conciliatory attitude of the Viceroy was prompted by a desire to make the Congress withdraw its boycott of the Prince's visit, and that as the Congress had already done its worst, there was no further need to placate it. Besides, as already mentioned above, the Government were encouraged by the resolutions of the Ahmadabad Congress to believe that Gandhi had decided not to carry matters too far.

### 3. Gandhi's Declaration of Non-violent War

This belief was, however, rudely shaken by a letter which Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy on first February, 1922, communicating the decision of Bardoli, a small

*tahsil* in the Surat District in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000, to embark on mass Civil Disobedience. In this historic letter Gandhi briefly traced the history of the movement,—how it was intended to launch the campaign at an earlier date but was suspended on account of the riots in Bombay on the occasion of the Prince's visit, how it was renewed on account of the repression of a virulent type resorted to by the Government since that event, and the summary rejection of the proposal to hold a Round Table Conference in order to arrive at a settlement. As specific instances of repression Gandhi referred to "the looting of property, assaults on innocent people, brutal treatment of the prisoners in jails, including flogging," suppression of "the freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of Press." "This lawless repression in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country," said Gandhi, "has made immediate adoption of mass Civil Disobedience an imperative duty." Gandhi made a final appeal to the Viceroy to revise his policy, set free all the prisoners convicted for non-violent activities, to free the Press from all administrative control and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities undertaken for "the redress of the Khilafat or the Panjab wrongs or *Swaraj*." The concluding part of the letter reads as follows :

"If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days......I shall be prepared to advise postponement of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive character...If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion and shall, therefore, have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding the public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of

its unalterable demands. Aggressive Civil Disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuses to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."[58]

Gandhi's letter was an ultimatum to the Viceroy, a procedure which has no precedent in the annals of India's struggle for freedom. It was a bold step which a man like Gandhi alone could think of, and he must have weighed very carefully all the pros and cons of Bardoli's "final and irrevocable choice," for which he was "chiefly responsible." The Government of India took up the challenge and their view is clearly reflected in the long telegraph sent to the Secretary of State on February 9. They did not 'minimise in any way the great anxiety caused by the situation,' but were "prepared for disorder of a more formidable nature than has in the past occurred," as they were "satisfied that the army and the great majority of the Police are staunch, there is no disaffection on the part of the majority of the population, and there are now more promising economic conditions with a bumper harvest in prospect." In reply to Gandhi's letter the Government of India issued on February 6 a Press Communique which may be virtully regarded as the Declaration of War. It began by pointing out "a series of misstatements in the Manifesto issued by Mr. Gandhi on the 4th February justifying his determination to resort to Mass Civil Disobedience", and ended with the following :

"The alternatives that now confront the people of India are such as sophistry can no longer obscure or disguise. The issue is no longer between this or that programme of political advance, but between lawlessness and maintenance of civilised Government. Mass Civil Disobedience is fraught with such dangers to the State that it must be met with sternness and severity. The Government entertain no doubt that in any measures which they have to take for its suppression they

can count on the support and assistance of all law-abiding and loyal citizens of His Majesty."

The last sentence was, of course, meant only for public consumption at Home, like the observation in the telegraph to the Secretary of State that "there is no disaffection on the part of the majority of the population." These were 'white lies' in which all belligerents freely indulge, and no one need take them seriously. The Government never counted on the support and assistance of the loyal citizens in India, for they knew very well that the number of such men, outside the rank of their own employees, would be very small, almost insignificant. The utmost they could hope for was the negative help in the shape of neutral inactivity of the people, but their chief reliance was on the army and the Police so pointedly referred to in the telegraph from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State.

Gandhi issued a long rejoinder to the Government Communique of 6 February. He exposed the falsity of the Government denial of lawless repression by citing a number of instances, which have been referred to in Section IV-7 of this Chapter. He also challenged the accuracy of many other statements and assumptions in the Government Communique. Of course, no one expected any change in the attitude of the Government as a result of all this correspondence, and Bardoli in Bombay and Guntur in Madras Presidency were making strenuous preparations to launch the no-tax campaign. Similar preparations were made in Chittagong, some parts of Assam, Bihar, Panjab, and C. P., as well as in many districts of Southern India. The Government also set in full motion their machinery of repression ; but it merely stiffened the spirit of the volunteers, thousands of whom suffered all kinds of oppression and went to prison with a smiling face.

The attention of the whole of India was centred on Bardoli. Gandhi himself went there to lead the campaign in person. On January 30, he addressed a big Conference of local people emphasizing all the preliminary requisites of the coming struggle. He went through every one of the conditions of the mass Civil Disobedience laid down by the Congress, and took the sense of the neeting on every one of the conditions. The Conference, attended by 4,000 *khaddar*-clad representatives, and 500 women adopted a resolution to begin a mass Civil Disobedience under the guidance of Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel. Gandhi was deeply impressed by the solemnity of the occasion and wrote a long account of the Conference in his paper *Young India*. He commenced by saying : "Bardoli has come to a momentous decision. It has made its final and irrevocable choice" ; and concluded with the famous lines of Cardinal Newman :

"Lead kindly Light , amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on ;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on."

Next day the Working Committee of the All-India Congress Committee met at Surat and congratulated the people of Bardoli. It, however, advised all other parts of India to co-operate with the people of Bardoli *taluq* by refraining from mass or individual civil disobedience of an aggressive character, except with the express consent of Mahatma Gandhi, previously obtained.

### 4. Retreat of Gandhi and the Collapse of N.C.O.

No words can adequately describe the intense animation and grave suspense with which India was looking forward to the impending struggle, swayed both by the hope of victory and fear of incalculable misery as the inevitable consequence of defeat. But no Indian could

foresee that the great battle for freedom begun with such trumpet and fanflare, would be irretrievably lost even before it was begun. He could not imagine in his wildest speculations that the bold advance of the veteran general, the idol of the people, would be immediately followed by a precipitate retreat, one being as glorious as the other was humiliating But the incredible did happen ; and true to the oriental spirit, Gandhi's devoted followers, unwilling or unable to judge in a rational manner, attributed the humiliating retreat to the Divine Will. As the Congress Enquiry Committee put it, "The country was all agog to witness the final triumph of soul force over physical might. But the gods had willed it otherwise."

The Divine Will was evidently manifested through a horrible crime perpetrated on 5 February, by an excited mob at a small village called Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur, far away in U. P. The details of the tragic incident will be related later;[58a] it will suffice to state here that the Police opened fire on a procession, but when their ammunition was exhausted, and they shut themselves up inside a building, the excited mob set fire to it, and as the members of the Police force were thus forced to come out, they were all, twenty-two in number, hacked to death, and their bodies were thrown into the flame. There was another mob-outbreak at Bareilly. but it was easily suppressed. These incidents created a feeling of disgust, and about fifty prominent leaders of the U. P. at once issued a manifesto condemning the conduct of the volunteers. Pandit Malaviya urged Gandhi to call an emergent meeting of the Working Committee. Gandhi came to Bombay on 9 February to see Pandit Malaviya, Jayakar, Natarajan, Jinnah and other politicians who had been endeavouring to bring about a Round Table Conference. They strongly urged Gandhi to suspend Civil Disobedience, and Gandhi agreed to do so. Pandit Malaviya and others were invited

to come to Bardoli. The Working Committee of the Congress met at Bardoli and discussed the political situation for two days ( 11 and 12 February ). The Committee resolved that mass Civil Disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended……and this suspension be continued till the atmosphere is so non-violent as to ensure the non-repetition of atrocities like those of Chauri Chaura, or hooliganism such as took place at Bombay and Madras, respectively, on 17 November 1921, and 13 January, 1922. All activities "specially designed to court arrest and imprisonment" and "all volunteer processions, public meetings merely for the purpose of defiance of the notifications regarding such meetings," were stopped till further instructions, and a new programme of constructive work was laid down. This decision was confirmed by the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi, on 24 and 25 February.

It would be hardly any exaggeration to say that the news of the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement fell upon India as a bolt from the blue. Writing long after the event, a foreigner, Louis Fischer, correctly diagnosed the whole situation in a few words : "At a word from Gandhi India would have risen in revolt. That word was not said; instead all the enthusiastic and sacrificing efforts were wasted or thrown away at the altar of the doctrine of non-violence." Before proceeding to note the general reaction and the consequences of the suspension, it is necessary to make a few general observations. It would be an insult to the intelligence of Gandhi if it be supposed for a moment that he could not envisage the possibility of an outbreak of violence in some parts of India in course of the excited campaign, particularly in view of the grave warnings conveyed by the recent riots in Bombay and Madras mentioned a few lines above. As a matter of fact, Gandhi restricted the area to Bardoli for that very

reason, and the site was selected to enable him to personally supervise the experiment by a tried set of people. To abandon the movement, so carefully planned and seriously undertaken, because something quite unconnected with it had happened nearly a thousand miles away, is an act which cannot be defended on any rational consideration, such as should normally determine the affairs of men. It is interesting to note that C. R. Das, in his undelivered Presidential Speech ( Ahmadabad Session) quoted above, comtemplated such a situation and gave it as his definite view that isolated disturbance was no argument against the Non-co-operation movement. Reference may also be made in this connection to Gandhi's own view in 1919 regarding a situation exactly similar to this. Lajpat Rai quotes the following passage from a letter of Gandhi to one who advised him to give up the idea of Civil Disobedience completely :

"How can I abandon the idea of resuming Civil Resistance, because in April people in some parts of Hindustan, owing to special causes, resorted to violence? Must I cease to do right because some people are likely at the same time to do wrong?......All action is controlled by a complexity of circumstances, some of which are under the doer's control and the others beyond his control. He can therefore restrain himself only till he has obtained the maximum of control over the surrounding circumstances, and then trust to the almighty to see him through. And that is exactly what I have done in suspending."[59]

The suspension of Non-co-operation was all the more regrettable as no one, least of all Gandhi himself, could fail to anticipate the disastrous effect of such frustration on the public, buoyed up to the highest enthusiasm by the prospect of a real test of the non-violent fight against the mighty Government. It is reason-

able to conclude that this frustration was the main cause of the ensuing political inertia of the masses, and as always happens, their pent-up energy found an outlet in the Hindu-Muslim riots. On the whole, it is difficult to acquit Gandhi of a serious blunder which retarded the progress of the national movement to a very considerable extent. If he could not foresee the possibility of violence in any part of this vast sub-continent during the campaign, he must have been a very poor judge of human character indeed. Either he should not have begun Civil Disobedience unless he was assured that above 300 millions of Indians have all been inspired by his precept and example,—though he would have to wait till doomsday —, or having begun it without that assurance, he should not have been deflected from his course by a single incident of violence, however bad as that might be.

We may now describe the reaction of Gandhi's action on his fellow-workers. Subhas Bose represented the view of a large section when he observed as follows :

"The Dictator's decree was obeyed at the time but there was a regular revolt in the Congress Camp. No one could understand why Mahatma should have used the isolated incident at Chauri-Chaura for strangling the movement all over the country. Popular resentment was all the greater because the Mahatma had not cared to consult representatives from the different provinces and because the situation in the country as a whole was exceedingly favourable for the success of the civil disobedience campaign. To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling-point was nothing short of a national calamity. The principal lieutenants of the Mahatma, Deshabandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai, who were all in prison, shared the popular resentment. I was with the Deshabandhu at the time and I could see that he was

beside himself with anger and sorrow at the way Mahatma Gandhi was repeatedly bungling. He was just beginning to forget the December blunder when the Bardoli retreat came as a staggering blow. Lala Lajpat Rai was experiencing the same feeling and it is reported that in sheer disgust he addressed a seventy-page letter to the Mahatma from prison."[60]

Jawaharlal Nehru's outburst was more dignified and to the point :

"We were angry when we learned of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts.,...... The sudden suspension of our movement after the Chauri Chaura incident was resented, I think, by almost all the Congress leaders—other than Gandhiji, of course. My father (who was in jail at the time) was much upset by it.[60a] The young people were even more agitated. Our mounting hopes tumbled to the ground and this mental reaction was to be expected. What troubled us even more were the reasons given for this suspension and the consequences that seemed to flow from them. Chauri Chaura may have been and was a deplorable occurrence and wholly opposed to the spirit of the non-violent movement, but were a remote village and a mob of excited peasants in an out-of-the-way place going to put an end, for some time at least, to our national struggle for freedom ? If this was the inevitable consequence of a sporadic act of violence, then surely there was something lacking in the philosophy and technique of a non-violent struggle. For it seemed to us to be impossible to guarantee against the occurrence of some such untoward incident. Must we train the three hundred odd millions of India in the theory and practice of non-violent action before we could go forward ? And, even so, how many of us could say that under extreme

provocation from the police we would be able to remain perfectly peaceful ? But even if we succeeded, what of the numerous *agents provocateurs*, stool-pigeons, and the like who crept into our movement and indulged in violence themselves or induced others to do so ? If this was the sole condition of its function, then the non-violent method of resistance would always fail."[61]

Although the Working Committee accepted the advice of Gandhi without demur, the All-India Congress Committee, which met at Delhi a few days later to consider the question, proved less pliable. There was a strong opposition, and many considered Gandhi's action not only a great blunder but a severe blow to the national movement. Even when the heat of the excitement subsided, opinions were sharply divided about the wisdom of the decision, as the Enquriy Committee reported in 1922. On the whole, quite a large section of the people felt what has been so aptly expressed by an impartial foreign observer, Romain Rolland, in the following words : "It is dangerous to assemble all the forces of a nation, and to hold the nation, panting, before a prescribed movement, to lift one's arm to give the final command, and then, at the last moment, let one's arm drop, and thrice call a halt just as the formidable machinery has been set in motion. One risks ruining the brakes and paralysing the impetus."[62]

The general feeling of repulsion against Gandhi's leadership was realized by the Government and fully exploited by them. The Government had long been contemplating the arrest of Gandhi, but stayed their hands for fear that his arrest would be attended with bloody outbreak in numerous places. But this fear being removed by the growing unpopularity of Gandhi, Lord Reading decided upon his arrest, and this was carried into effect by the Government of Bombay on 10 March.

The official chronicler, Rushbrook Williams, who records this view, observes: "That the arrest, being well timed, passed off peacefully, should not mislead the reader into thinking that it could have been effected with equal absence of popular excitement at an earlier period. It came when Mr. Gandhi's political reputation was at its nadir, when the enthusiasm of his followers had reached the lowest ebb; when the public mind of India was engrossed with other issues."[63]

Gandhi was tried at Ahmadabad on March 18, 1922. He pleaded guilty to the charge but made a statement, referred to above,[64] explaining why he, a staunch loyalist and co-operator with the British Government, had turned into an uncompromising opponent and non-co-operator. The Sessions Judge, Mr. Broomfield. sentenced him to six years' simple imprisonment.

The first phase of Non-co-operation movement ended with Gandhi's cry of halt, and any chance of its revival at an early date was removed by his confinement behind the walls of prison. For, the whole movement centred round one person, and his disappearance gave a death-blow to it at least for the time being. It is not indeed a sign of healthy public life in any country that a great movement should rest upon the exertions and guidance of one man alone. But in the case of Non-co-operation movement, it was even worse still, for it depended wholly upon the personal whims and predilections of Gandhi which did not always appeal to his followers as based upon a clear process of reasoning intelligible to them. Nevertheless, he was obeyed without question,-and retained the implicit confidence of millions, such as has never fallen to the lot of any other political leader before or after him. The secret of it lies in the combination of a saint and a political leader in his person. Gandhi, by his loin cloth and high ideals of an ascetic life of renun-

ciation, succeeded in canalising the traditional reverence and unquestioning faith in a spiritual *guru* in India to the service of politics. Whether Gandhi was the most saintly politician or the most political saint, will ever remain a matter of opinion. But the combination of the dual capacity in him introduced a new element in Indian politics—the idea of a political *guru*—which worked wonders during his life and which he left as a legacy to this country.

In the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi Gandhi had tried hard to maintain that the resolution of suspension did not in any way nullify the resolution on Non-co-operation passed in the Nagpur session of the Congress. But neither his eloquence nor his prestige could conceal the fact that Non-co-operation was dead. This was fully admitted by the Congress Enquiry Committee, which observed : "There can be no doubt that the principle and policy laid down at Ahmadabad were completely reversed to the great disappointment of an expectant public", and the Congress "failed to create sufficient enthusiasm to carry on the constructive programme with the earnestness it deserved". The last is a very significant admission, and should be borne in mind in making a proper study of the Non-co-operation movement, both in 1922 and thereafter. It means that the enthusiasm which sustained the movement was really kept up by its fighting programme, and the constructive programme, such as weaving and spinning, removal of untouchability etc., which was not likely to involve any collision with the Government, really fell flat upon the masses who looked upon them as merely of secondary importance, to be tolerated for the sake of Gandhiji, if not as an unnecessary hindrance to the real fight.

The Congress Enquiry Committee had also the

candour to admit that "no man other than the Mahatma could lift the wet blanket thrown upon most of the workers by the Bardoli and Delhi resolutions, or effectively divert the course of Congress activities into the channels marked out by these resolutions." They believed, that if Gandhi could "make one of his lightning tours through the country", the whole aspect of things would have been changed. This may be seriously doubted in view of the callous indifference with which Gandhi's imprisonment was looked upon by the public. As has been remarked, not a leaf stirred in this vast country on that occasion. The Congress Enquiry Committee and the orthodox followers of Gandhi have taken pains to explain this indifference as merely 'the homage of reverence which the people paid to Gandhiji by observing that exemplary self-restraint and perfect non-violence which were so dear to his heart'. One is constrained to observe that these were no less dear to his heart in 1919, when the mere rumour of his arrest created serious troubles in the Panjab and Bombay; in 1922, only a few months before, when Chauri Chaura incident took place; or in 1942, when Gandhi was again arrested and put into prison. We must, therefore, look for some other reasons to explain the all-pervading calm after Gandhi's incarceration in 1922. That these included popular resentment at his action and the consequent waning of his popularity will probably be disputed by none, except the blind followers of Gandhi.

The Congress Enquiry Committee rightly observed that it would be "unprofitable to inquire what would have happened if Mahatma Gandhi had not been arrested and sent to prison." What actually happened admits of no doubt. The first phase of the Non-co-operation movement had ended and there was no chance of its revival, so long at least as Gandhi was in prison.

## VI. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE DURING N.C.O.

The Non-co-operation movement brought into prominent relief the brute force of the British rule in India. This was neither unknown nor unexpected after the recent happenings in the Panjab. But, strangely enough, the movement made also an exhibition, side by side, of some of the best as well as the worst instincts of the Indian people.

### 1. The Oppression by the Government.

Reference has already been made above to the repressive measures adopted by the Government in connection with the visit of the Prince of Wales. We may now make a rapid review of the general policy pursued by the Government throughout the campaign, and the measures adopted by them to put it down. On March 24, 1921, a full-dress debate was held in the Legislative Assembly on Non-co-operation, in course of which Sir William Vincent outlined the policy of the Government. He declared that the object of the Non-co-operation was to paralyze the Government, and for this purpose "there is no source of discontent which they have not used," such as fomenting strikes of labourers, setting tenants against *zamindars*, etc. The Government was therefore justified in taking repressive measures to put down the movement.

These measures consisted of terrorist activities and strict enforcement of the repressive laws already on the Statute Book, such as Section 144, preventing assembly of more than five persons, Seditious Meetings Act, etc. Directions were issued for an extensive use of these powers, and the District Officers were permitted to enforce the total prohibition of inflammatory meetings. But the Government also took resort to terrorism in various forms. The Non-co-operators were humiliated in various ways, brutal assaults were made on picketers, and 'mild' (?)

*lathi* charge, i. e. merciless beating with iron-shod heavy bamboo sticks, became the order of the day. The Police, in the name or in the guise of house-searches, with or without warrants, acted like gangsters, breaking, looting, assaulting the inmates of the house, including the *zenana*, and putting them to all kinds of indignities. More excusable were the activities of the Government by way of counter-propaganda against the Non-co-operators. In U. P. the Government issued a Communique stating that the N. C. O. movement was revolutionary and anarchical, and that it was the duty of all servants of the Crown to counteract it. The existing prohibitions to Government officers in regard to participation in political movements were withdrawn, and they were encouraged to declare themselves openly and actively against the N. C. O. movement. The Collectors were instructed to attend and address meetings of Reform Leagues and Liberal Leagues designed to oppose the Non-co-operation movement.

But sometimes the counter-propaganda assumed a ludicrous form. Thus in Bihar the anti-drink campaign of the Non-co-operators was fought by a counter-propaganda which emphasized the "value of wine both as food and as a medicine." It was also added in the Government Manifesto that "many great men were wine-drinkers, such as Moses, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Shakespeare, Watt, Gladstone, Tennyson, Bismarck."

As noted above, the Government repression became more severe in consequence of the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales. The campaign of repression was most severe in Calcutta. More than three thousand volunteers were arrested during the ten days preceding the Prince's visit. Even respectable and inoffensive men like Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra suffered indignities in the hands of the custodians of law and order.

A unique feature of repression was added in the shape of Anglo-Indian Civil Guards, who, together with the Gurkha troops and Police, formed the veritable trio of oppression. A specimen of their brutality was witnessed in Entally, a suburb of Calcutta, on December 25, 1921. After a drunken brawl the Civil Guards assaulted the Muslims of the locality. They were soon reinforced by other Civil Guards and several European Sergeants, "who madly roamed about the streets, revolver in hand, ready to shoot whoever interfered with their mad career. One man was killed outright and some twenty wounded. The same night the police raided a mosque." 'They entered with shoes on, and are alleged to have desecrated it.'[65]

In Bihar the European officer of the Police Station, Sonepur, snatched away from the Congress volunteers who were preaching *hartal*, flags, badges and even *khadi* clothes which they had on them, snd tore everything to pieces. Immediately after, he raided the Congress office and ordered the constables to beat and plunder ( *maro aur looto* were the actual words used). The constables carried the order to the letter by assaulting the volunteers, breaking open boxes and almirahs, and even carrying away Rs. 120 in cash. Religious books like the *Ramayana* and the *Gita* were burnt.[65a]

Such instances of Government oppression can be multiplied to almost any extent. But it is unnecessary to refer to them in detail, particularly as it is not always possible to ascertain the exact truth. In their Communique dated February 6, the Government asserted : "There is thus no shadow of justification for the charge that their policy has been one of indiscriminate and lawless repression." Gandhi, who formally made this charge in his letter to the Viceroy, dated 4th February, 1922, gave the following reply to the above statement of the Government :

"Instead of an ample expression of regret and

apology for the barbarous deeds that have been committed by officials in the name of law and order, I regret to find in the Government reply a categorical denial of any 'lawless repression'. In this connection I urge the public and Government carefully to consider the following facts whose substance is beyond challenge :-

(1). The official shooting at Entally in Calcutta and the callous treatment even of a corpse.

(2). The admitted brutality of the Civil Guards.

(3). The forcible dispersal of a meeting at Dacca, and the dragging of innocent men by their legs although they had given no offence whatsoever.

(4). Similar treatment of volunteers in Aligarh.

(5). The conclusive (in my opinion) findings of the Committee presided over by Gokul Chand Narang about the brutal and uncalled for assaults upon volunteers and the public in Lahore.

(6). Wicked and inhuman treatment of volunteers and the public at Jullunder.

(7). The shooting of a boy at Dehra Dun and the cruelly forcible dispersal of a public meeting at that place.

(8). The looting admitted by the Bihar Government of villages by an officer and his Company without any permission whatsoever from anyone,but, as stated by non-co-operators, at the invitation of a Planter, and the assaults upon volunteers and burning of *khaddar* and papers belonging to the Congress at Sonepur.

(9). Midnight searches and arrests in Congress and Khilafat offices.

"I have merely given a sample of the many 'infallible proofs' of official lawlessness and barbarism. I have mentioned not even a tithe of what is happening all over the country, and I wish to state without fear of successful contradiction that the scale on which this

lawlessness has gone on in so many Provinces of India puts into shade the inhumanities that were practised in the Punjab, if we except the crawling order and the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh......but as if this warfare against innocence was not enough, the reins are being tightened in the jails..."[66]

Those who know the scrupulous regard for truth which characterised Gandhi throughout his life, would not hesitate for a momemt to accept his statement in preference to the Government version. There were many allegations of inhuman cruelties behind the bars of prison, but for obvious reasons no details were available. But narratives of many prisoners who came out of jail at a later period leave no doubt of the cruel treatment of the helpless victims who incurred the wrath of the authorities for not following the humiliating practices meant for and enforced upon ordinary criminals of low classes.

An impartial testimony to the lawless and repressive activities of the Government is afforded by the vigorous denunciation of their measures by the Moderates, who cannot be accused of having any partiality for the Non-co-operators. Reference has been made above[67] to the general condemnation of the Government repression by various individuals and organizations of the Moderate Party. Some specific allegations were made by the Indian Association of Calcutta, the central organization of the Bengal Moderates, dominated by veterans like Surendra Nath Banerji who was then a Minister of the Governor of Bengal. They addressed two letters to the Viceroy. In one of these they observed :

"The Indian Association have always supported and will support Government in all attempts to put down lawlessness and intimidation, but when Government in the name of preserving peace and order allow their own officers to exceed the bounds of law and to

create a general state of terrorism, they feel bound to enter their emphatic protest".

In another letter they specially invited the attention of the Viceroy to the following :-

1. The wide-spread impression, confirmed by newspaper reports of trials, that persons are being arrested and convicted simply for selling or wearing *khaddar*, crying *Bande Mataram* or *Gandhi Maharaj ki jai*, or for asking people to close their shops on the 24th December.

2. Assaults and rude behaviour by the military, the Police and the Anglo-Indian Civil Guards on unoffending persons.

3. Indiscriminate arrests.

4. Arrests of ladies.

5. Maltreatment of arrested persons.

6. Reported forcible seizure and removal of "*Khaddar*" from shops and other places.

7. Trial of persons *in camera* and in jail ; information in some cases not being given even to Counsel desirous of appearing for, or watching proceedings on behalf of, accused persons.

8. Severity of the sentences passed on persons accused of political offences or offences of a technical or trivial character.

9. The detention of persons in custody without any charge being formulated against them.

10. The stationing of military pickets in various parts of the city ( in some cases with machine guns ).

The letter concludes with a reference to the great excitement caused by the assault on Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra.[67a]

Reference may be made to some grave instances of oppression.

A. Two cases of unprovoked assault authenticated by non-official Committees who made a careful inquiry

into them.

*i. Chittagong Gurkha Outrage.*

On October 20, 1921, Sri J. M. Sen Gupta, the Congress leader of Chittagong, along with 17 others, were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for three months. This created great commotion, and a large crowd gathered outside the jail precincts and spread all along the road towards the Railway Station where, it was reported, the prisoners would be taken that very evening. The people formed a procession, with torchlights, bands, *sankirtan* parties and display of firework. The procession peacefully followed the prisoners' carriage up to the approaches of the Station, though it was alleged that there was picketing and burning of foreign clothes on the road by some street boys. When the head of the Procession reached within fifty yards of the main entrance to the Station, a large number of people had already proceeded by short cuts to the Railway compound which was also full of peoples who had already gathered there since early hours of the evening. There was no disturbance of any kind, but suddenly a band of Gurkhas began to "assault the people right and left indiscriminately, mainly with the butt end of the rifle." As the people fled on all sides, the Gurkhas chased them all along and struck them all the way. The Gurkhas also attacked several carriages and struck severe blows upon their occupants, including a Zamindar who was also an Honorary Magistrate. One Gurkha party also fell upon the Processionists and struck them. Altogether more than 100 persons were wounded, some of them very severely.[68]

*ii. Matiari Firing.*

On July 21, 1921, a disturbance took place at the village Matiari, in Hyderabad District ( Sindh ), in connection with the meeting of the Aman Sabha, in course

of which the Police fired upon the crowd and inflicted one fatal and twelve other casualties. According to Official Report the disturbances were due to the attempt of the Khilafatists to wreck the Sabha and molesting those who participated therein. According to non-official inquiry the Khilafatists did try to persuade the people not to attend the Sabha, but did not molest anybody for doing so. But even the Official Committee unanimously held "that there was no justification for the police firing. No warning was given to the crowd before the order to fire was given and, though after the first shots the crowd had dispersed, firing was unnecessarily continued." No attempt was made to render medical aid to the injured either by Mukhtiarkar ( First Class Magistrate ) or by the Police Sub-Inspector. The Official Committee also held that responsible Police officials like the District Superintendent were guilty of making false statements and many of the allegations against the Khilafatists "had been shamelessly fabricated by the Matiari Police." "The Government of Bombay dismissed Mukhtiarkar and censured the conduct of the Police Sub-Inspector."[69]

There is no reason to disbelieve these specific events or to doubt the general accuracy of the accounts of these Committees. Special importance attaches to the allegations of oppression and ill-treatment recorded in the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee which was composed of Pandit Motilal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, M. A. A. Ansari, V. J. Patel and S. Kasturiranga Iyengar as members, and Hakim Ajmal Khan as Chairman. The illegal and repressive acts of the Government have been summarised by them as follows :

B. Wholesale arrests of the leaders and workers of the Congress.

Many districts particularly in the Panjab, U. P., Bengal and Assam were from time to time practically denuded

of the more active of their Congress and Khilafat workers by wholesale and indiscriminate arrests and prosecutions. A few examples may be quoted as specimens to show how the authorities acted in the name of law :

(i) Fifty-five members of the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee were discussing a resolution on volunteering at an emergent meeting at Allahabad. The Police entered, seized the draft resolution, asked every individual present whether he approved of it, and on his replying in the affirmative, sent him to the Police van downstairs. Those who did not move quickly enough had some gentle pressure applied to them from behind, and the progress of at least one was accelerated by a mild assault. They made no defence in the Court and were sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment each, which was simple or rigorous according to the personal whim of the Magistrate. The Government, as advised by a special judge appointed by it, had to admit that the convictions were illegal, but the men were still kept in prison. One of them died in jail, and as he was a strong young man, a public inquiry was demanded, but was not allowed.

(ii) C. R. Das was arrested on 23 December, on the eve of his departure to Ahmadabad to attend the session of the Congress of which he was the President-elect. The case was adjourned from time to time till 12th February, as it was necessary for the Government to prove his signature on the appeal, for issuing which he was prosecuted. At last the handwriting expert of the Government swore that the handwriting was that of Das, who was accordingly convicted and sentenced to six months' imprisonment after being detained for nearly two months as undertrial prisoner.

(iii) Lala Lajpat Rai was convicted under the Seditious Meetings Act and sent to jail, when the Law

Officer of the Government, who was not consulted before, gave his opinion that the conviction was illegal. Lalaji was released, but as soon as he stepped out of the prison gate, he was arrested and sentenced for another offence to two years' imprisonment.

(iv). Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment for two offences: 1. Declaring his intention to picket foreign shops in a public speech; 2. Presiding at a committee meeting which decided to send letters to certain cloth merchants calling upon them to pay the fines imposed by the cloth merchants' own association under their own rules. This was construed as an abetment of extortion.

### C. Lawlessness outside the Courts

Appalling lawlessness prevailed outside the Courts. It may be broadly stated that causing injury to the person, property or reputation of a Non-co-operator not only ceased to be an offence, but came to be regarded as an act of loyalty to the Government of a specially meritorious character. Specific references may be made to a few typical varieties of oppression :

"Taking the country as a whole, a general summary of the various kinds of anti-Non-co-operation activities may be given in a few short sentences. Gandhi caps and *Khaddar* dress were anathema to the officials generally throughout India, and marked out the wearer for all kinds of insults and humiliations, as also for false prosecution. Assaults on volunteers, stripping them of their clothing, and ducking them in village tanks in winter months were some of the 'innocent' practical jokes designed by the Police for their own amusement. Confiscation of licenses for arms, forfeiture of *jagirs*, *watans* and *inams*, withholding of water-supply for irrigation, and refusing *takavi* advances were some of the milder punishments

for those who were not charged with specific offences. Destruction of Congress and Khilafat offices and records and of national educational institutions, burning of houses and crops and looting property were resorted to in the case of the more obstinate recalcitrants. Several cases of forcible removal of jewellery from the persons of women and of indecent assaults and outrages committed on them, as well as the burning and trampling under foot of religious books and other sacred objects, have also been brought to our notice. The estate of an extra-loyal Zamindar in Utkal (Orissa) has gained a wide notoriety in that Province for cases of shooting, assaults on women and a novel method of humiliating and insulting high-caste people by sprinkling liquor on them and compelling them to carry night-soil on their shoulders."

2. The Excesses Committed by the People

The Enquiry Committee claimed that the people bore all these with admirable patience and self-restraint. That this was not due to cowardice or want of strength was, according to the Committee, demonstrated by the fact that it was the martial races of the Panjab and U. P. who, while smarting under brutal treatment, maintained the most wonderful self-restraint. This may be generally correct, but there is no denying the fact that excesses were also committed by overzealous Non-co-operators, and sometimes it fully resembled the atrocities of the Police. The Committee admitted some sporadic cases of outbursts of violence, but refused to believe that the Non-co-operators were to be held responsible for the few sad incidents that occurred. While one may readily admit that these cases were few and far between, it is difficult to exonerate the Non-co-operation movement from all blame in this respect, whatever we might think of the actual perpetrators of the crimes. Reference has been made to the tragic

occurrences in Chauri Chaura and the brutal nature of the crime will be described later. A few other instances alleged by the Government may be mentioned below :

A. Picketing

'Peaceful' picketing was one of the methods usually resorted to by the Non-co-operators to prevent the purchase of foreign goods and liquor, and attendance at schools, colleges and University classes and examinations. But like the 'mild' *lathi* charge of the Police, picketing was often far from 'peaceful'. Non-co-operators usually stretched themselves on the ground before the gates of educational institutions so that no one could get in without trampling upon their bodies. Sometimes young boys were specially employed for the same purpose.

B. Intimidation

Intimidation was used to force shop-keepers to close shops and make the drivers of carriages cease to ply on the occasion of the *hartals*. There is hardly any doubt that the charge was not altogether unfounded.

C. Agrarian Riots in U. P.

Early in 1921, there were great agrarian troubles in the districts of Rae Bareilly and Fyzabad in U. P. Troubles were due to the refusal of the tenants to pay some of the illegal and oppressive cesses which were imposed by the landlords, and often realized with the help of the Police and the Magistrate, who, in addition to their natural sympathy with the landlords scented in the opposition of the tenants the influence of the Non-co-operation movement. A great riot raged in many villages from January 2 to 7. A scuffle between the peasants and the Police at Fursatganj on January 5 led to a gathering, two days later, of about 10,000 people before the jail at Munshigunj.

Though dispersed by Police fire, the mob looted the *bazar*, and some property of the landlords. On January 23, a serious riot took place at Rachrawan in which several Constables were killed. In course of another peasant rising on the 29th at Gosaigunj, about 1,000 men lay flat on the railway line on hearing that their leader was being carried away in the incoming train. The train had to stop for three hours until the police cleared the line by buckshot fire. To relieve the situation, the N.C.O. leaders organized a Kishan ( peasant ) League under the guidance of Pandit Motilal Nehru and Purushottamdas Tandon, and the troubles gradually subsided.

The Government believed that these agrarian troubles were created, or at least exploited, by the Non-cooperators in various parts of U. P. and Bihar. It was alleged that the mob, armed with *lathis* and sticks, shouted *Mahatma Gandhiki Jai, Shaukat Ali Muhammad Aliki Jai*, etc. , and attacked petty as well as substantial *Zamindars*, and *Talukdars*. The leaders of the mobs moved about the country collecting cesses. "Short of taking life they resorted to every form of intimidation, including the defiling of wells, the destruction of crops, and the burning of houses." The ryots were promised *Swaraj* if they would refuse payment of rent to the *Zamindars*.[70]

D. Malegaon

A serious mob-outbreak at Malegaon in the Nasik District (Bombay) caused considerable loss of lives and property. The population, predominantly Muslim, was largely affected by the Khilafat agitation. The conviction of several Momins in April 1921, for carrying arms at a mass meeting in contravention of an order by the District Magistrate, created great commotion, and a Police constable was roughly handled. Thereupon the City Sub-Inspector with a few official and a dozen armed constables proceeded to

the town. Being attacked by the mob, his men fired some rounds of small shots, but as the mob did not disperse, they took refuge in a Hindu temple. The mob brought fuel and kerosene and set fire to the temple, which was burnt along with several neighbouring houses. The Sub-Inspector, while trying to escape in the guise of a woman, was caught, beaten to death, and thrown into the fire. One or two constables were also killed and burnt, while the other officials escaped, though badly injured. The mob cut the telegraph wires and stopped the mail tongas from running. The unarmed Police on town duty were driven out of the town. Some were beaten and some were killed. It was alleged that the mob burnt the Hindu temple, because the Sub-Inspector had taken refuge there and the inmates of the temple refused to surrender him.

Next day the mob plundered the houses of some Muslim leaders who had counselled moderation regarding the Khilafat agitation. They then forced the Mamlatdar to release the convicted Momins from the jail, and for the next three days they burnt houses and committed other outrages. Peace was not restored till the arrival of the troops from Ahmadnagar on April 29, 1921.[71]

E. Giridih

There was a violent outbreak at Giridih ( Santal Parganas, Bihar ) on April 25. It arose out of the refusal of a person to accept the decision of the Non-co-operation *Panchayat* (arbitration tribunal, replacing the regular courts) of Bishnupur. The offender was socially boycotted, and when his daughter went to the village well to draw water, a Khilafat volunteer is alleged to have assaulted her and broken her pitcher. The volunteer was prosecuted, and when the trial was going on, about ten thousand people surrounded the court building. They stoned the

Police, inflicting severe injuries, and damaging the jail building. In the afternoon a mob of about 5,000 appeared in front of the *thana*, pelted the Sub-Inspector with stones and brickbats, and wrecked and looted his quarters. Armed Police and the Gurkhas arrived the next day and order was restored.[72]

F. Aligarh

There was a riot at Aligarh on July 5, 1921. The official version is as follows :

On July 5. 1921, when a political agitator, Malkhan Singh, was being tried by the Magistrate, a crowd endeavoured to rush the court. They were driven by the Police with the help of batons, and were also unsuccessful in their attempt to attack Police buildings. Later on a mob attacked and burned certain buildings in the Police quarters, including the Treasury. The armed guard fired on them. One constable was killed and three dangerously wounded. A number of rioters were wounded. No attack was made on the houses of Europeans.[73]

G. Picketing of liquor shops

This often led to violent acts such as snatching away of liquor bottles and assaulting the purchaser, burning of liquor shops etc. More serious charges were brought against the volunteers by Mr. Hammond, the officiating Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar and Orissa. He cited the three following cases : (1) A Muslim vendor in Ranchi died, and the Khilafat party tried to obstruct his funeral rites. After he was buried, his corpse was exhumed, thrown upon the public road and the face beaten in with a brick. (2) Gopi Kahar of Chatra was beaten and, with his face blackened, paraded through the town because his wife sold food to those who visited liquor shops. (3) A woman of Kateya, near Siwan, named Musammat Paremia Koerin, was, for similar offence, stripped naked

and driven through the country by a howling mob. When a Police officer went to hold an inquiry he was attacked by a mob.

Similar incidents were also reported from other places. At Dharwar in Bombay, while volunteers were picketing liquor shops, the mob tried to murder a Sub-Inspector of Police and to set fire to certain buildings.

### H. Chauri Chaura

The most deplorable outbreak occurred at Chauri Chaura, a Police-Station, 15 miles from Gorakhpur in U. P. As a result of vigorous picketing there was hardly any customer of foreign cloth or liquor in the local *bazar*. On February 1, a zealous police officer was alleged to have beaten some volunteers engaged in peaceful picketing. In consequence of this, all the volunteers of the neighbouring villages, numbering about 500, accompanied by a large crowd, went to the *thana* and asked for an explanation of the conduct of the police officer. Some neutrals pacified them and the whole party moved on. After they had proceeded to some distance there was a hue and cry in the rear. It was alleged that the Police roughly handled some of the stragglers in the rear. In any case, the mob returned and began to throw brickbats. The armed Police fired on the mob. How long the firing lasted is not known, but dead bodies of only two rioters were later found near the *thana*. It is not unlikely, however, that some wounded persons were removed by the mob. After some time the firing ceased, presumably because the Police had exhausted their ammunitions. As soon as the crowd realized this, they rushed towards the *thana* building, shouting: "through Gandhiji's kindness even the bullets have turned to water". On their approach the policemen went inside and bolted the door. The mob then set fire to the building. Some

perished and those who were driven out by the heat and smoke were thrown back into the fire after being besmirched with kerosene.

It should be pointed out that the allegations against the Non-co-operators, including those mentioned above, were not inquired into by any reliable committee and rest solely upon official statements whose accuracy may justly be challenged in the light of many serious charges brought by officials which later proved to be without any foundation or highly exaggerated. In the case of Chauri Chaura, however, we possess a statement signed by the President of the District Congress Committee and others who were not likely to err against the popular side. In view of the horrible nature of the crime and the role it played in the suspension of the Non-co-operation movement,[73a] part of this authentic statement is quoted below :

"The scene presented a most horrible and gruesome appearance. Two buildings were still burning. The roofs of almost all the buildings had been burnt down. Some boxes and trunks belonging evidently to the members of the police force were found lying open without their contents. Twenty-two corpses, more or less burnt and disfigured, were lying there, seven having been almost completely burnt......Besides these burnt corpses, there were two corpses, apparently of men of the mob, which were not burnt, one of them clothed in khadder which had a gunshot wound......There was a very large number of brickbats and *kanker*, evidently used in attacking the police, found in the compound. On our return to the Railway station at 2 P. M., we found three wounded men two of whom were police chowkidars and one a *bannia* of the *bazaar*. The last had a gunshot wound in the thigh and the chowkidars had brickbat wounds on their heads and bodies. It is said that all the police

force stationed there, including the armed guard which had been sent there a day before, as some trouble was apprehended, has been murdered except two who were out on duty elsewhere, and one constable who managed to escape'."[74]

It is likely that the provocations by the Police were much graver than the Government version admitted, but still there cannot be any excuse for the demoniac brutality displayed by the people. Further, although many bad characters must have taken part, probably the main part, in enacting the tragedy, it is impossible to believe that the Non-co-operators were not at all involved in the series of events leading to the gruesome tragedy. Chauri Chaura definitely proves two things. First, it is idle to expect that in the excitement caused by Non-co-operation movement it would always retain its character of *ahimsa* or non-violence; and secondly, there is no limit to the excesses of a mob once they are roused to a frenzy of passion.

Apart from these specific instances, the Government brought general charges against the National Volunteers for inciting the masses to violence and disorder. There is no doubt that it was through the Volunteer organizations that the message of *Swaraj* by Non-co-operation was spread among the masses, and this constituted the chief characteristic, and the principal success, of the whole movement. It is idle to expect that the masses, or even the Volunteers who guided them, would always remain faithful to the cult of non-violence. It is, therefore, not unreasonable that the Government viewed it as pregnant with possibilities of serious disorders. According to the official Report, "the members of the Volunteer organizations spread themselves over the countryside, inspiring rustics, only a shade more credulous than themselves, with contempt for constituted authority." The Government, therefore, held

the Non-co-operation movement directly or indirectly responsible for all the disturbances in the country during 1921, including industrial and railway strikes, and attributed them more specifically to Volunteer organizations and the doctrine preached by Gandhi and Ali Brothers during their joint country-wide tours. This is undoubtedly an exaggerated statement, but there is no denying the fact, that the Non-co-operation movement made the people politically self-conscious and infused them with an enthusiasm for redressing the wrongs which they had so long patiently borne, either in silence or with mild ineffective protest of a passive character. The agrarian riots in U. P. or the Akali movement, to which reference will be made later, and many other riots and disorders—though not all—cannot be directly traced to the Non-co-operation movement, but may be regarded as a consequence of the new spirit engendered by that movement. In spite of obvious exaggeration it is not possible to deny that there was a great deal of truth in the following allegation of the Government :

"In Bihar, there was a strike, complicated by non-co-operation activities, in the East Indian Railway Collieries, leading to a riot at Giridih. Another strike, also accompanied by disorder, broke out on the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway. At Nagpur, in the Central Provinces, the intimidation practised by "National Volunteers" against persons resorting to liquor shops, led to serious disturbances. In Assam, inflammatory appeals to ignorant tea-garden labourers, began to produce their inevitable effects in riot and disorder. In the Madras and Bombay Presidencies mobs of hooligans, with the name of Gandhi upon their lips, practised subtle terrorism and intimidation of a sort with which the authorities found it most difficult to cope, while Khilafat preachers roused the frenzy of poor and ignorant

Muslims with the cry of "Religion in danger". Everywhere through these masses of combustible elements, moved the emissaries of non-co-operation, preaching, it is true, non-violence, but coupling with this admonition fervent exhortations as to the necessity of "passively" defying the authority of the State, and inflammatory appeals for the rectification of the Panjab and Khilafat grievances, and the acquisition of immediate Swaraj. Everywhere they invoked the magic of Gandhi's name thereby strengthening, whether consciously or unconsciously, the belief of the credulous masses in his miraculous powers. Thousands of ignorant and humble persons, whether dwellers in the city or countryside, were fired with enthusiasm for the great "Mahatma" whose kingdom, when it came, would bring them prosperity, affluence, and a respite from labour. Little wonder that while eagerly drinking in the tales of the Government's iniquity and oppression, they set small store by admonitions against the use of violence."[75]

The charge contained in the last sentence, and that of a general 'non-violent' coercion, were also brought against the followers of Gandhi by eminent political leaders. The following extract from a speech of Mrs. Besant during Non-co-operation movement reflected the opinion of a large body of men. "Under the Gandhi Raj there is no free speech, no open meeting except for Non-co-operators. Social and religious boycott, threats of personal violence, spitting, insults in the streets, are the methods of oppression. Mob support is obtained by wild promises, such as the immediate coming of Swaraj, when there will be no rents, no taxes, by giving to Gandhi high religious names, such as Mahatma and Avatara, assigning to him supernatural powers and the like."[76]

The historian has not sufficient data to enable him to pass a final judgement on the allegations of either

the brutality of penal measures adopted by the officials or the violent character of the non-violent Non-co-operation movement. There seems to be no doubt, however, that there is a great deal of truth in the charges and counter-charges by the Congress and the Government. The Non-co-operation movement was both directly and indirectly responsible for much violence, and sometimes even serious crimes, and the Government measures were often unnecessarily cruel and harsh, deliberately designed to terrorize the people. To argue that they were necessary to maintain law and order, is but a tacit admission that the Government was based on force, pure and simple, and not on the willing allegiance, far less loyalty, of the people at large, as the Government of India claimed in season and out of season. On the other hand, there is no denying the fact that few, if any at all except Gandhi himself, were inspired by the true spirit of *Satyagraha* or non-violence, as expounded by him and accepted by his followers in theory.[76a] Most of the people, including leaders, had really no sincere faith in this cult ; they looked upon it as a useful political expedient, but did not accept it as a creed.

## VII. THE SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF N.C.O.

Before concluding this Chapter, it is incumbent upon the historian to inquire, how far the Non-co-operation movement was a success or failure. It has been argued that it must be pronounced to be a failure, because it failed to achieve *Swaraj* within a year as was promised to the people by Gandhi, and no conspicuous success attended the efforts to carry out the different items of Non-co-operation as laid down in the resolution of the Calcutta Congress in 1920 and endorsed by the Nagpur session. Fortunately for the historian, there is not much

dispute about the main facts assumed in the above argument. All the facts in connection with the movement were reviewed by a responsible committee consisting of eminent persons, though naturally they all belonged to the Congress Party. But the general impartiality of this committee, so far as the ascertaining of facts is concerned, must be recognized by all. This is admitted even by an eminent veteran of the Moderate Party, though not without an unchivalrous fling. He observes : "The Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee was quite instructive. It was certainly a one-sided document, as it was bound to be in the nature of things. But there was in it enough to enable uncommitted men to draw non-partisan conclusions." [77] The conclusions which he has drawn as a non-partisan—a claim which many would be disposed to challenge—do not materially differ from what has been stated above regarding each item, and it is only fair to add that the Committee itself admitted the failure, in a manner which a 'partisan' Committee has seldom done or is likely to do in future. Whatever may be the difference between an impartial critic and the Committee, one may venture to assert, that it would be one of degree and not of kind, and that also not of a very substantial character.

But even admitting all this, it is difficult to concede that the Non-co-operation movement was a failure. There is a great deal of truth in the claim made by C. R. Das in the following passage in his Presidential address at the Gaya session of the Congress held in December, 1922.

"It is assumed that a movement must either succeed or fail, whereas the truth is that human movements—I am speaking of genuine movements—neither altogether succeed nor altogether fail. Every genuine movement proceeds from an ideal and the ideal is always higher than the achievement...Was the Non-co-operation Movement in India

a success ? Yes, a mighty success when we think of the desire for *Swaraj* which it has succeeded in awakening throughout the length and breadth of this vast country. It is a great success when we think of the practical result of such awakening, in the money which the nation contributed, in the enrolment of the members of the Indian National Congress and in the boycott of foreign cloth. I go further and say that the practical achievement also consists of the loss of prestige suffered by Educational Institutions and the Courts of Law and the Reformed Councils throughout the country......Yet it must be admitted that from another point of view, when we assess the measure of our success in the spirit of Arithmetic, we are face to face with "the petty done" and the "undone vast". ...I say to our critics : I admit we have failed in many directions, but will you also not admit our success where we have succeeded ?"

A similar claim is put forward in the following passage of the Report of the Congress Enquiry Committee :

"Witnesses from all parts of the country speaking from direct local knowledge have testified to the outstanding features of the crisis through which the country is passing. These are : (1) the general awakening of the masses to their political rights and privileges, (2) the total loss of faith in the present system of Government, (3) the belief that it is only through its own efforts that India can hope to be free, (4) the faith in the Congress as the only organisation which can properly direct national effort to gain freedom, and (5) the utter failure of repression to cow down the people. Our own personal observation in the course of our tour round the whole country fully corroborates the evidence on these points. We have found the general population

permeated with the indomitable spirit of a great national awakening unprecedented in the history of the human race for its wide sweep and rapid growth. The great bulk of the people showed complete lack of confidence in the Government and were found to be firm believers in non-co-operation and all that it stands for. Repression, where it had done its worst, had no doubt left behind it a trail of sorrow and suffering, but failed to crush the spirit of the people."

Although stated with some amount of pardonable exaggeration, the claims made by the Congressmen, as illustrated in the above passage, cannot be lightly brushed aside. Even the Government was forced to admit that in spite of its impracticable nature, the Non-co-operation movement was engineered and sustained by nationalist aspirations. In the statement submitted to the Parliament, the Government of India made the following observations regarding the general results of the Non-co-operation movement :

"But when we turn to consider the campaign as a whole, it would be idle to assert that it was infructuous. Whether the results obtained are desirable or undesirable will be demonstrated beyond all possibility of doubt by the passage of time. But that these results are real is no longer open to question. Mr. Gandhi's intensive movement during the years 1921 and 1922 has diffused far and wide, among classes previously oblivious to political considerations, a strong negative patriotism born of race hatred of the foreigner. The less prosperous classes both in the town and the countryside have become aroused to certain aspects—even though these be mischievous, exaggerated and false—of the existing political situation. On the whole, this must be pronounced, up to the present, the most formidable achievement of the non-co-operation movement. That it

has certain potentialities far good will be maintained by many ; that it will immensely increase the dangers and difficulties of the next few years can be denied by few."[78]

Making necessary allowance for a foreign Government's view about what constitutes true patriotism, and what is mischievous, on the part of the Indians, the above lines may justly be regarded as an indirect admission of the great success of the Non-co-operation movement.

The most outstanding feature of the Non-co-operation movement was the willingness and ability of the people in general to endure, to a remarkable degree, hardships and punishments inflicted by the Government. This is the reason why, though the Non-co-operation movement collapsed, the memory of its greatness survived, and was destined to inspire the nation to launch a more arduous campaign at no distant date. For, the movement served as a baptism of fire which initiated the people to a new faith and new hope, and inspired them with a new confidence in their power to fight for freedom. Any one who reviews the whole course of events during the movement must be struck with two undeniable facts. First, that the Congress movement had, *for the first time*, become a really mass movement, in the sense that national awakening had not only penetrated to the people at large, but also made them active participants in the struggle for freedom. The second, which is no less important, but generally ignored by friends and foes alike, is that the Indian National Congress was, almost overnight, turned into a genuine revolutionary organization. It was no longer a deliberative assembly, but an organized fighting party, pledged to revolution. Its weapons were different, but its aims, objects and animating spirit closely resembled those of the militant nationalism of the early years of the century, represented by the so-called terrorist party. But there were two significant differences. It did not work in secret, and

it was widely accepted almost all over India as the only party which could achieve the independence of the country. Henceforth the national energy was directed to a revolutionary programme,—non-violent, if possible, violent, if need be.

## VIII. OFFSHOOTS OF NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT.

### A. Moplah Rebellion

The Moplahs are a band of fanatic Muslims, poor and ignorant, about a million in number. They are descended from the Arabs who had probably settled in the Malabar coast,[79] about the eighth or ninth century A. D. and married mostly Indian wives. They lived in Malabar along with about two million Hindus, and had acquired an unenviable reputation for crimes perpetrated under the impulse of religious frenzy. They were responsible for no fewer than thirty-five outbreaks, of a minor nature, during the British rule. But their most terrible outbreak, mainly due to the Khilafat agitation, took place in August, 1921, and is described in the official report as follows:

"During the early months of 1921, excitement spread speedily from mosque to mosque, from village to village. The violent speeches of the Ali Brothers, the early approach of Swaraj as foretold in the non-co-operating press, the July resolutions of the Khilafat Conference—all these combined to fire the train. Throughout July and August innumerable Khilafat meetings were held, in which the resolutions of the Karachi Conference were fervently endorsed. Knives, swords, and spears were secretly manufactured, bands of desperados collected, and preparations were made to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of Islam. On August 20, when the District Magistrate of Calicut, with the help of troops and police, attempted to arrest certain leaders who were in possession of

arms at Tirurangadi, a severe encounter took place, which was the signal for immediate rebellion throughout the whole locality. Roads were blocked, telegraph lines cut, and the railway destroyed in a number of places. The District Magistrate returned to Calicut to prevent the spread of trouble northwards, and the machinery of Government was temporarily reduced to a number of isolated offices and police stations which were attacked by the rebels in detail. Such Europeans as did not succeed in escaping—and they were fortunately few—were murdered with bestial savagery. As soon as the administration had been paralysed, the Moplahs declared that Swaraj was established. A certain Ali Musaliar was proclaimed Raja, Khilafat flags were flown, and Ernad and Walluvanad were declared Khilafat kingdoms. The main brunt of Moplah ferocity was borne, not by Government, but the luckless Hindus who constituted the majority of the population.........Massacres, forcible conversions, desecration of temples, foul outrages upon women, pillage, arson and destruction—in short, all the accompaniments of brutal and unrestrained barbarism,—were perpetrated freely until such time as troops could be hurried to the task of restoring order throughout a difficult and extensive tract of country.

"As the rebellion had spread over a wide area, the troops available in the Malabar District were unable to cope with the situation, and strong reinforcements had to be sent; and by the middle of October these amounted to four battalions, one pack battery, a section of armoured cars, and other necessary ancillary services. As the rebels took to the hills, it was some time before they could be caught in appreciable numbers. By the end of the year 1921 the situation was well in hand, and the back of the rebellion was broken. An idea of the fierceness of some of the fighting may be gained from the night

attack at Pandikad, on which occasion a company of Gurkhas was rushed at dawn by a horde of fanatics who inflicted some 60 casualties on the Gurkhas and were only beaten off after losing some 250 killed. Throughout the campaign casualties among the Government troops totalled 43 killed and 126 wounded; while the Moplahs lost over 3,000 in killed alone. A great tragedy marked the end of the rebellion. On Novemebr 19, 1921, a batch of seventy Moplah prisoners was being conveyed by train, but through the neglect of the guards there was no arrangement for ventilation in the closed coach in which they were put, and all of them died by asphyxiation."[80]

The Muslim leaders put the number of Moplah martyrs (?) as 10,000 and they also referred to the desecration of mosques and other outrages perpetrated by British troops while suppressing the revolt. They as well Gandhi and his blind followers ignored the terrible outrages upon a large number of Hindus, but these described above in the Government version, have been corroborated by independent testimony. It will suffice to refer to a few documents out of a mass of materials collected on the subject.

1. A statement signed by the Secretary and the Treasurer of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee,Secretary, Calicut District Congress Committee, Secretary, Ernad Khilafat Committee, and K. V. Gopala Menon refers to the following misdeeds of the Moplahs : "Their wanton and unprovoked attack on the Hindus ; the all but wholesale looting of their houses in Ernad and parts of Valluvanad, Ponnani, and Calicut taluqs ; the forcible conversion of Hindus in a few places in the beginning of the rebellion, and the wholesale conversion of those who stuck to their homes in later stages ; the brutal murder of inoffensive Hindus, men, women, and children, in cold

blood, without the slightest reason except that they are "kaffirs" or belong to the same race as the policemen, who insulted their Tangals or entered their mosques ; the desecration and burning of Hindu temples ; the outrage on Hindu women and their forcible conversion and marriage by Moplahs".

The signatories add : "These and similar atrocities (were) proved beyond the shadow of a doubt by the statements recorded by us from the actual sufferers who have survived".[81]

2. The memorial of the women of Malabar to Lady Reading contains the following : "It is possible that your Ladyship is not fully appraised of all the horrors and atrocities perpetrated by the fiendish rebels ; of the many wells and tanks filled up with the mutilated, but often only half dead, bodies of our nearest and dearest ones who refused to abandon the faith of our fathers ; of pregnant women cut to pieces and left on the roadsides and in the jungles, with the unborn babe protruding from the mangled corpse ; of our innocent and helpless children torn from our arms and done to death before our eyes and of our husbands and fathers tortured, flayed and burnt alive ; of our hapless sisters forcibly carried away from the midst of kith and kin and subjected to every shame and outrage which the vile and brutal imagination of these inhuman hell-hounds could conceive of ; of thousands of our homesteads reduced to cinder-mounds out of sheer savagery and a wanton spirit of destruction ; of our places of worship desecrated and destroyed and of the images of deity shamefully insulted by putting the entrails of slaughtered cows where flower garlands used to lie, or else smashed to pieces...We remember how driven out of our native hamlets we wandered, starving and naked, in the jungles and forests......"[82]

( This is only a short extract from a long harrowing tale of misery ).

3. Proceedings of the Conference at Calicut presided over by the Zamorin. "Resolution VI. That the Conference views with indignation and sorrow the attempts made in various quarters by interested parties to ignore or minimise the crimes committed by the rebels such as

a. Brutally dishonouring women ;

b. Flaying people alive ;

c. Wholesale slaughter of men, women, and children ;

d. Burning alive entire families ;

e. Forcibly converting people in thousands and slaying those who refused to get converted ;

f. Throwing half-dead people into wells and leaving the victims for hours to struggle for escape till finally released from their sufferings by death.

(Two other items refer to looting and desecration of temples as described in the above memorial of the ladies).[83]

4. Typical instances of horrible outrages on women were described in detail in the *New India* edited by Mrs. Annie Besant and the *Times of India*.[84] A sense of decency forbids us to reproduce them. Reference may be made to the brutal treatment of a respectable Nai'r lady at Melator and the way a large number of Hindu girls were outraged. Inquisitive readers would find these and other incidents in the Appendix of Sankaran Nair's book *Gandhi and Anarchy*. Sankaran Nair has referred to only "three narratives out of literally hundreds that might be selected from the English and vernacular papers."

5. Sankaran Nair points out that 'in addition to those mentioned in these articles two other forms of torture were credibly reported as having been resorted to in the case of men, namely, skinning alive, and making them dig their own graves before their slaughter.[85]

The Congress leaders at first disbelieved the stories. Gandhi himself spoke of the "brave God-fearing Moplahs" who were "fighting for what they consider as religion, and in a manner which they consider as religious." Little wonder that Khilafat leaders passed resolutions of congratulations to the Moplahs on the brave fight they were conducting for the sake of religion. But when hundreds of Hindu refugees arriving at Calicut confirmed the most terrible stories of barbarous and fanatical cruelty, a wave of horror passed over those Hindus who were not blinded by Gandhi's new-fangled ideas of Hindu-Muslim unity at any cost. Local members of the Congress and Khilafat asked for, and obtained, permission to enter the disturbed area in order to pacify the Moplahs, but they speedily returned with frauk admission that they could effect nothing. When truth could not be suppressed any longer, and came out with all its naked hideousness, Gandhi tried to conciliate Hindu opinion by various explanations, denials, and censure of.the authorities which were crystallized in the following resolution passed by the Congress at Ahmadabad :

"The Congress expresses its firm conviction that the Moplah disturbance was not due to the Non-co-operation or the Khilafat Movement,[85a] specially as the Non-co-operators and the Khilafat preachers were denied access to the affected parts by the District authorities for six months before the disturbance, but is due to causes wholly unconnected with the two movements, and that the outbreak would not have occurred had the message of non-violence been allowed to reach them. Nevertheless this Congress deplores the acts done by certain Moplahs by way of forcible conversions and destructions of life and property and is of opinion that the prolongation of the disturbance in Malabar could have been prevented by the Government of Madras accepting the proffered assistance of Moulana Yakub Hassan and

other Non-co-operators and allowing Mahatma Gandhi to proceed to Malabar, and is further of opinion that the treatment of Moplah prisoners as evidenced by the asphyxiation incident was an act of inhumanity unheard of in modern times and unworthy of a Government that calls itself civilised."

This resolution is unworthy of a great national organization, which launched the Non-co-operation movement as a protest against the Panjab atrocities. Its deliberate attempt to minimize the enormity of the crimes prepetrated by a band of fanatic Muslims upon thousands of helpless Hindus betrays a mentality which is comparable to that of the Government of India in the case of the Panjab atrocities in 1919,and must be strongly condemned by any impartial critic. It is interesting to compare the words —almost apologetic in tone—condemning the Moplahs with those which are used against the Government for the faults—severe though they are—of some officials. It is nothing short of ridiculous to maintain that the Moplahs would not have been guilty of inhuman cruelties towards their Hindu brothers only if the message of non-violence had been allowed to reach them. It is quite clear that they had heard of the Non-co-operation slogans and Khilafat cries, but we are to presume that the 'non-violence' part of it was carefully withheld from them. It is tacitly assumed that these fanatic Moplahs were more amenable to the cult of non-violence than hundreds of people—men of Chauri Chaura for evample —who had broken into violence even though the message of non-violence was preached to them. Is it for this reason, one might ask, that while the excesses of the mob at Chauri Chaura induced Gandhi to suspend Civil Disobedience, the hundred times more heinous crimes of the Moplahs were not allowed to dlsturb his equanimity—they did not raise even a ripple on the placid

water of the Hindu-Muslim unity and Non-co-operation movement. The fact seems to be that Gandhi and his blind Hindu followers were prepared to go to any length in order to nurse the tender plant of Hindu-Muslim unity which had been grown by him, and had willy-nilly to be preserved at any cost during the campaign against the Government, as success was otherwise impossible. It is not necessary to imagine that Gandhi or his devoted Hindu followers were callous to the incredible sufferings that the Moplahs had inflicted upon the Hindus, but they perhaps thought that they had to swallow the bitter pill for the sake of the greater good of the country as a whole.

There is no doubt that it was a great tactical blunder on the part of the Government not to allow Gandhi to visit the land of the Moplahs. It might possibly have some good effect, and in any case could not have worsened the situation. But the refusal of such permission, six months berofe the outbreak, can hardly be regarded as a conducive factor, far less the cause of it. It will also be generally admitted that though the Moplah rebellion may or may not be the direct outcome of the Non-co-operation movement —available materials are, however, sufficient for presuming that it was—,it is impossible to dissociate it altogether from the spirit of defiance engendered by the Khilafat movement at the very moment.

Mrs. Besant has definitely connected the Moplah rebellion with the Non-co-operation and Khilafat movemnts, and many other eminent men have expressed similar opinion. Even Muslim leaders indirectly supported this view. Thus Hasrat Mohani, in his Presidential speech at the annual session of the Muslim League, held at Ahmadabad on December 30, made the following observations about the atrocities of the Moplahs :

"The Moplahs justify their action on the ground that at such a critical juncture, when they are engaged in a war against the English, their neighbours (Hindus) not only do not help them or observe neutrality, but aid and assist the Ehglish in every way. They can, no doubt, contend that while they are fighting a defensive war for the sake of their religion and have left their houses, property and belongings and taken refuge in hills and jungles, it is unfair to characterise as plunder their commandeering of money, provisions and other necessaries for their troops from the English or their supporters."

In characterizing the Moplah action as a religious war against the British, Hasrat Mohani definitely regards it as a political movement which cannot be dissociated from the Khilafat agitation.

His justification of the atrocities of the Moplahs is not only puerile in the extreme, but directly contrary to facts. He ignores the patent fact that in the majority of cases, the almost wholesale looting of Hindu houses in portions of Ernad, Valluvanad and Ponnani *taluqs* was perpetrated on the 21st, 22nd and 23rd of August before the military had arrived in the affected area, i. e. long before the Moplahs had betaken themselves to hills and jungles. It would be interesting to know whether Hasrat Mohani regarded the forcible mass conversion and inhuman outrages on Hindu women by the Moplahs also as dictated by military necessity ?

The levity with which the Muslim and Congress leaders treated the Moplah outrage is nothing short of scandalous. The Moplah outrages far exceeded in enormity those perpetrated during the Martial Law in the Panjab. If the action of the British Cabinet and the Viceroy in condoning or ignoring those outrages was considered by Gandhi as *raison d'etre* of the N:C.O. campaign, what are we to think of the remissness of Gandhi and his followers in respect of instituting a proper inquiry and

taking proper steps to punish the delinquents in Malabar ? By their attitude towards the Moplah outrages Gandhi and the Congress forfeited their moral right to criticize the action of the British authorities in respect of the outrages in the Panjab. Gandhi's ejaculations about the "God-fearing Moplahs" and the congratulations showered on them by the Congress and Muslim leaders, remind one of O' Dwyer's telegraphic approval of Dyer's action. The saddest part of the whole episode is that the two great virtues which elevated Gandhi above every other politician, viz., an unflinching regard for truth and a high sense of morality and justice, he sacrificed at the altar of the Hindu-Muslim unity, which was, at the best, a pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp, and at the worst, a political expediency.

In view of the callous attitude of the Hindu leaders, the condoning of the conduct of the Moplahs by the Muslim leaders can scarcely be a matter of surprise. Reference has been made above to the views of Hasrat Mohani—the great 'national' champion of Indian independence and 'the intrepid Muslim patriot', as Muhammad Ali called him in his Presidential Address at the annual session of the Khilafat Conference at Ahmadabad. In the session of the Conference at Cocanada held in 1923, when all the woeful tales of barbarous outrages committed by the Moplahs were widely known all over the country, the other great national leader, Shaukat Ali, President of the session, moved a resolution for the provision of Moplah orphans and families. "Thousands of Moplahs", he said, "had been martyred (sic), but they owed a duty, both on religious and humanitarian grounds, to these brave Moplahs". While conceding that some Hindus had suffered at the hands of the Moplahs, he said the whole chapter was a closed book to them ; but they had a duty to the brave Moplahs. He announced that he and his brother

would each provide for the maintenance of one Moplah orphan. Member after member rose to narrate the sufferings that the Moplahs had endured in the hands of the Government, but there was no reference to the inhuman barbarities committed by them upon the Hindus. The Khilafat Conference adopted the resolution moved by Shaukat Ali, and funds were collected for the maintenance of the Moplah orphans. One looks in vain for a similar action on the part of Gandhi and the Congress leaders to help the victims of the Moplah outrage.

The Jamiat-ul-Ulema Conference, held at Cocanada on December 28, 1923, proceeded further still. It passed a resolution condemning the atrocities committed on the Moplahs and decided to raise a fitting memorial to perpetuate the memory of the Moplah martyrs ! [86]

B. Satyagraha for Reforms in Religious Institutions.

The two notable incidents under this head were the *Satyagraha* movement at the temple of Tarakesvara in Bengal, and the Akali movement in the Panjab ending in the Nankana tragedy. Both the movements originated in an effort to remove the glaring abuses in the management of old religious institutions, with rich endowments, and received their inspiration from the political movement launched by Gandhi.

The *de facto* proprietor of the temple at Tarakesvara was the *Mohant* or the resident abbott. Though supposed to lead the life of an ascetic and religious teacher, persons holding the post were known to be of vicious character and lax morality. Serious allegations were made against Satis Giri who was the *Mohant* in 1924. C. R. Das, the leader of rhe Swarajya Party, first attempted to negotiate a settlement with him, but it proved unsuccessful. So Das launched a *Satyagraha* movement in 1924 for taking peaceful possession of the temple. But as soon as the volunteers

began to move towards the temple, the Police appeared on the scene. "The usual Satyagraha scenes were re-enacted at Tarakeswar—peaceful volunteers moving up from one side and the Police attacking them mercilessly on the other and occasionally making arrests." The movement became very popular all over Bengal and the *Satyagraha* campaign went on for several months. Ultimately the *Mohant* was forced to come to a compromise with Das and an agreement was drawn up whereby the temple and the major portion of the property attached to it was to be placed under the administration of a public committee. It involved the creation of a Trust approved by the High Court. But at this stage a third party raised some objections, and while the matter was under consideration Das suddenly died, and the *Mohant* nullified the agreement. Thus the whole thing ended in a lamentable failure.[87]

Far greater interest attaches to the Sikh movement on the same line which commenced at an earlier date and undoubtedly inspired the movement against the *Mohant* of Tarakesvara. The Sikh League, inaugurated in 1919 with the avowed object of safeguarding the political and religious interests of the Sikh people, turned its attention to the mismanagement of the Golden temple at Amritsar. Under the influence of the prevailing spirit of Non-co-operation, resolutions were passed at a Sikh Conference in 1920, demanding control by the Sikhs themselves of their religious and educational institutions without interference of any kind from the Government. As a result of their efforts the Sikhs secured full control over the Golden Temple and the Khalsa College. Encouraged by this success a Committee, called the 'Gurudwara Prabandhak' or the Reformed Sikh Committee was formed in November, 1920, to undertake the management of all Sikh Gurudwaras and other religious institutions. The Sikh shrines, many

of which enjoyed considerable revenues, were hitherto under the *Mohants*, or resident abbots. These were generally of licentious character, and were accused of malversation and abuses of every kind. As a result of the agitation some shrines voluntarily surrendered their control to the reforming party, and a few were occupied by force, leading to fracas. The reformers now planned to take possession of the Nankana Gurudwara, the wealthiest of the Sikh shrines, with an income of several lakhs of Rupees. They proposed to hold a grand *Diwan* or session of the Khalsa at Nankana Sahib to inquire into the administration of the shrine.

The body of Puritan Sikhs, known as the Akalis, formed the vanguard of the reforming party. They used to form *jathas* or companies which travelled from shrine to shrine in their work of reformation. On February 23, an Akali *jatha* appeared at Nankana Sahib, but was refused admission inside. A second company of 150 appeared and quietly entered the temple. The doors of the temple were shut after they had entered, but when the doors were opened again, there was no trace of the *jatha*.

The chief *Mohant* of Nankana, Narain Das, had engaged a body of five hundred hooligans and Pathans, and as soon as the *jatha* had entered, the doors were closed and the Akalis were attacked with rifles, revolvers, and other missiles. All the Akalis were killed and their dead bodies were burnt with wood and kerosene oil. Evidently their bodies were cut to pieces, for traces of different parts of the bodies, chopped off into bits, were found in the burnt heaps.

This grim tragedy stirred the whole country and eventually the management of the shrine was made over to the Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. After a protracted trial, the *Mohant* and seven others were sentenced to death.

## C. The Assam Coolie Exodus and the Chandpur outrage.

Early in May, 1921, there was a stampede of labourers from tea plantations in Assam. The lot of these coolies has always been very miserable, as mentioned above,[88] and owing to a slump in tea trade there were great reductions and wholesale dismissals in some gardens managed by Europeans. There was also probably the indirect influence of the Non-co-operation movement which generated a belief in the minds of the coolies that Gandhi was a divine incarnation and *charka* was the remedy of all the evils they were suffering from. In any case, about 12,000 men and women left the garden and walked towards their distant homes with the cry of *Gandhi Maharaj ki jai* on their lips. A large number of them reached Chandpur and was halted there as they had to cross the mighty river Padma in order to proceed to their destination. At first Mr. Sinha, the Sub-Divisional Officer (S. D. O.), spent some money to facilitate their transportation, but this was stopped by the Bengal Government, presumably under the influence of the tea-planters. Mr. Macpherson, a representative of the European Tea Association of Assam, came to Chandpur and, with the help of the S. D. O., tried to induce the coolies to return to the gardens. This alarmed the coolies who rushed towards a steamer lying by at the *ghat*. The S. D. O. ordered the gangwa ybetween the steamer and the receiving flat to be removed and several coolies were reported to have fallen into the river. The coolies were then driven to the Railway station. In course of the melee the S. D. O. is alleged to have been struck by some coolies. Thereupon the Divisional Commissioner, Mr. K. C. De, who was at Chandpur, wired for a batch of armed Gurkhas from Narayangunj. Next night, at about 10-30 P. M., when the coolies were peacefully resting at the Railway shed, they were asked to remove

themselves immediately, but some of them refused or delayed. Thereupon the Gurkhas fell upon these coolies—men, women and children—and by kicks, and beating with sticks and butt-ends of their guns forced them to leave the Railway station and take refuge in an open ground even though it was raining. Mr. C. F. Andrews, who visited the place next day, has given a heart-rending account of the persecuted and oppressed refugees—poor, feeble, and emaciated women, with their babies, dragging wearily along by the hand their little children, who were quite unable to move quickly, while all the time the Gurkha soldiers kept beating them with the butt-ends of their rifles in order to force them to move faster. For the next few days there was a complete *hartal* in the town and the local leaders fed and looked after nearly 4,000 stranded coolies. From this time the Non-co-operation leaders were at work. There was a Railway strike followed by a Steamer strike organized by C. R. Das and J. M. Sen Gupta. The strike began on May 24 and lasted till the middle of September. For more than three months the whole land and water traffic route to Chittagong Division was in complete deadlock. Even C. R. Das had to risk the crossing of the Padma river by a country boat when he went to Chandpur to organize the strike. Sir Henry Wheeler, a member of the Executive Council, inquired into the matter and submitted a long report, justifying the action of the officials.[89]

A non-official Inquiry Committee was appointed by the Tippera Congress Committee with J. M. Sen Gupta as Chairman. The report of the Committee fully endorses the story of brutal assault as given above. Wheeler held that the injuries were inflicted on a small number of coolies and these were of very minor nature, and not at all serious. He also denied that the bayonets were used. According to the non-official Committee the

evidence of the station staff who were present at the time of the occurrence prove that "injuries were inflicted with *lathis*, butt-ends of guns and bayonets", the number of injured coolies was very large, and many of them received very serious injuries. According to the non-official Committee the assault was serious and a premeditated one. Mr. K. C. De, the Commissioner, admitted that the assault was begun almost immediately after the Gurkhas had arrived, and there was hardly any interval between the moment when the coolies were asked to clear and the moment when the beating actually began.[90]

D. The Nagpur Flag Satyagraha

On 1 May, 1923, the police authorities at Nagpur objected to a procession carrying the National Flag, and promulgated section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code to prohibit it. The volunteers disobeyed the order and were arrested and sentenced. The Movement received the blessings of both the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. It soon developed into an All-India Movement and volunteers poured in from different parts of India. It was guided and inspired by the two Patel Brothers—Vitthalbhai and Vallabhbhai— and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was also arrested in connection with it. The Government demanded that the processionists should apply for permission, but the Congress claimed the right to proceed along any public road without let or hindrance. A big procession was taken out on the 18th March and it was intended to be a trial strength between the Government and the volunteers. But, curiously enough, the procession was allowed to pass. The Government gave out that the Congress had asked for permission, but the Congress contended that it never did so.[91]

E. Bardoli No-Tax Satyagraha (1928).

In order to complete the picture we may mention

here a remarkable case of *Satyagraha*, though it took place somewhat later, in 1928. Reference has been made above to Gandhi's decision to launch a mass Civil Disobedience movement in the *tahsil* or *taluk* of Bardoli in 1922, and his sudden abandonment of the project in view of the tragic happenings at Chauri Chaura. In 1928 Bardoli launched the no-tax campaign which constitutes a landmark in the history of *Satyagraha* movement in India. It arose out of the periodical revision of assessment of the land revenue in Bombay after every thirty years. As a result of this revision the revenue of two neighbouring *taluks* of Bardoli and Chorasi was raised by 30 per cent. and later, as a result of protest, reduced to 22 per cent. But the peasants regarded even this increase as too high and demanded an open inquiry which was refused. After much deliberation the peasants proposed to withhold payment of revenue in case the Government stuck to its decision. Gandhi studied the situation and blessed the struggle, which was carried on under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Patel organized the *taluk* by setting up about twenty camps in convenient centres placed in charge of 250 volunteers. On February 12, 1928, a representative conference resolved that the revision settlement was arbitrary, unjust, and oppressive, and called upon all landholders to refuse payment of revenue until the Government accepted it at the old rate or appointed an impartial tribunal to settle the whole question of revision by investigation and inquiry on the spot.

Men, women and children attended the meetings called by the Sardar, and took pledge to remain non-violent, to suffer to the utmost, and cheerfully lose everything they possessed. A new spirit pervaded the whole *taluk* which was almost converted into a military

camp, where fighting, sacrifice, and defiance were on the lips of everyone.

"The Government tried its best to compel payment. It tried flattery, bribery, threats, fines, imprisonment, forfeiture, and *lathi*, charges. It attempted to divide the communities. Property on a large scale was attached and sold for a song to outsiders, as no local buyer came forward. They attached about 1400 acres of land and sold it by auction. Pathans were employed to threaten people and create an atmosphere of fear. But all this only infused more solidarity in the *taluk*. A strong social boycott was imposed on all Government representatives and against those who bought the attached property. But physical necessities were never denied even to the opponents.

"The whole of India sympathised with the struggle, and looked with admiration on the heroes of Bardoli. Women, no less than men, took part in the struggle. Several members of the Legislature resigned as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government. The matter was also discussed in the Parliament. The peasants stood firm and non-violent. After five and a half months' struggle, the Government yielded and the Governor appointed a Committee of Inquiry. All property that had been attached was restored, and village officers who had resigned were reinstated. The Committee found that the complaints of the peasants were substantially true and instead of 22 per cent. they recommended only 6 per cent. increment."[92]

## IX. NON-CO-OPERATION AFTER GANDHI'S ARREST

### 1. Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee

The general situation, as it developed after the arrest of Gandhi, was reviewed by the All-India Congress Committee at Lakhnau on June 7-9, 1921. The Committee noted that in spite of the suspension of all aggressive

activities by the Congress Committees, repression in a severe form was resorted to by the Government in several parts of the country, and that in consequence of this there was a widespread feeling that the country should be advised to resort to some form of Civil Disobedience to compel the Government to abandon their present policy and to concede the triple demand of the Congress. The Committee postponed the consideration of this question till the next meeting to be held in Calcutta on August 15, and requested the President to nominate a few gentlemen to tour round the country in the meantime and report on the situation to the next meeting. This is the genesis of the "Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee" to whose Report frequent references have been made above. The Committee, as finally constituted, consisted of Pandit Motilal Mehru, C. Rajagopalachari, M. A. Ansari, V. J. Patel and Kasturiranga Aiyangar. Hakim Ajmal Khan, the Acting President of the Congress, was the ex-officio Chairman of the Committee.

The Committee made an extensive tour almost all over India in order to study the political situation. They issued a questionnaire and received written replies from 459 witnesses, of whom 366 were also orally examined. The Report of the Committee was submitted in October, 1922.

The Committee made a general review of the success and failure of the Non-co-operation movement, item by item, and their findings have been referred to in the preceding sections. As noted above, the Committee found a lack of faith in, and enthusiasm for, the constructive programme of the Congress on the part of a large number of workers. At the same time the Committee held that the country was 'not prepared at present to embark upon general Mass Civil Disobedience.' They, however, recommended that the Provincial Committees be

authorized to sanction limited Mass Civil Disobedience as contemplated by the All-India Congress Committee in its meeting at Delhi on November 5, 1921.[92a] But it is clear from the whole Report, that although this was the specific question which led to the appointment of the Committee, it had ceased to be of any practical importance, and the most engrossing topic which agitated the Congress leaders was the question of entry into the Legislative Councils.

## 2. The Council Entry

It appears that as soon as the militant phase of the Non-co-operation movement was suddenly brought to an end in February, 1922, and the first outburst of rage, resentment and protest at the unexpected action of Gandhi had passed away, the leaders set their heads together to devise the programme of work for the future. They knew full well that the country had no great enthusiasm for the constructive programme chalked out as a substitute, and the arrest of Gandhi left no hope for the revival of the fighting programme in its old form. Some of them therefore hit upon the idea of carrying on the fight inside the legislatures set up by the Government of India Act, 1919. Of course it would mean going back upon the Congress resolution carried after a keenly contested fight in the Calcutta session of September, 1920, and almost unanimously passed in the Nagpur Session at the end of the year. The Congressmen therefore at first felt some hesitation in giving public expression to this view, as it would tacitly imply a confession of defeat in respect of an important item of the programme. But gradually, the idea developed and assumed a new form which might, in the opinion of some, be made to fit in with the basic idea of Non-co-operation. Still the majority were in a hesitant mood, and it is significant that this all-

important question was not specifically referred to the Enquiry Committee, though it looms large in their Report and may be said to be its chief topic for discussion.

There is no doubt that the idea was agitating the Congress leaders long before the Enquiry Committee was appointed at the beginning of June in 1922. Subhas Chandra Bose tells us that the idea struck C. R. Das shortly after the Bardoli resolution, even when he was in the Alipore Central Jail, and he elaborated to his co-workers, then in prison along with him, his plan of non-co-operation within the legislatures. The idea was opposed by many and "discussions regarding this new plan were carried on vigorously from day to day in the Alipore Central Jail." "As these discussions went on for some weeks, two parties crystallized among the political prisoners in the Alipore Jail and they proved to be the nuclei of the future 'Swaraj' and 'No-change' parties." Perhaps the first hint of this new policy was given to the public in the Address of Srimati Basanti Das, wife of C. R. Das, in her Presidential Address at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Chittagong in May, 1922. "She stated that the Congress might have to consider a change in tactics and suggested, among other things, that the policy of non-co-operation within the legislature was worth considering." As Subhas Bose pointed out, "it was not difficult to guess who had inspired her speech, and taking it as a feeler sent out by her husband, a storm of controversy was at once let loose all over the country."93

The Enquiry Committee examined a large number of witnesses, and an overwhelming majority were against any change in the Congress programme of boycott of Councils. It is evident, however, that many of them did not grasp the full significance of the new idea of

wrecking the Reforms from within, as it was gradually developed. But although a very strong majority deprecated the idea of Council entry, the members of the Committee were equally divided. Three of them, M. A. Ansari, C. Rajagopalachari. and S. Kasturiranga Aiyangar were against, while the other three, Ajmal Khan, Motilal Nehru, and V. J. Patel, were in favour of it. Each group put its views separately in the form of minutes, and the elaborate arguments and counter-arguments cover nearly fifty printed pages, comprising about two-fifths of the whole Report. The main arguments, advanced by each may be summarised as follows. Those who were against Council-entry urged :

1. The proposal involves a distinct violation of the principle of Non-co-operation and a clear departure from the policy of the Congress.

2. It will mean an admission of the failure of Non-co-operation, for even the particular form of Non-co-operation in the Councils, which the other group proposes, was discussed and rejected by the Congress in the Special session held at Calcutta.

3. That the country is definitely against the view, is proved by the evidence given before the Committee, for the Council-entry, as proposed by the other group, is supported only by a negligible number of Congressmen. Although there is a strong section in favour of entering the Councils, they are against total obstruction, but would rather follow a policy of responsive co-operation.

4. A campaign of entry into Councils would mean a diversion of the public attention and energy from the constructive programme and would have the certain effect of relegating it to the cold shade of neglect.

5. It is absolutely impossible to secure a majority in the Councils sufficient to create deadlocks in the manner contemplated.

6. As a large number of Non-co-operators, including the most eminent leaders, are disqualified from membership of the Council by reason of sentences of imprisonment for over six months passed against them, it will be inconsistent with self-respect and dignity for other Non-co-operators to think of entering into the Councils. Babu Rajendra Prasad voiced the public opinion, when he said : "It would be cowardice to go and I use the word for want of a stronger term."

7. As Mahatma Gandhi pointed out it 1920, in the Calcutta session of the Congress, it was not a good and honest policy to enter into an institution in order to wreck it. Besides, indiscriminate obstruction will be a manifest violation of the oath of allegiance which every member has to take before accepting a seat in the Council.

8. Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to Council Entry on grounds which still hold good.

9. The chances are remote for obtaining such a majority at the elections as is one of the essential conditions of the success of the scheme.

10. Even if there be such a majority the Government will not be brought to its knees through the Councils deadlock, for Government have many weapons like veto.

The arguments put forward by the groups favouring Council-entry may be summed up as follows :

1. Political tactics are never immutable. They must change with the change of conditions. As Mahatma Gandhi had expressed it, when he defended himself for suspending Non-co-operation, "consistency is a desirable quality, but it becomes a 'hobgoblin', when it refuses to see facts." Gandhi's whole political career illustrates this. He adopted *Satyagraha* in March 1919, abandoned it after the disturbances in April, at the Amritsar Congress pleaded for co-operation ; —"from one pole to the other, all in the brief space of eight months." After another

three months he began a march back from co-operation. Six months later, Non-co-operation became the accepted creed of the Congress; after a year's working it was extended by the All-India Congress Committee to include Civil Disobedience. Though, as Mahatma Gandhi himself declared, the two movements were radically different in character, the change was effected without any authorisation by the Congress. The Ahmadabad Congress put its seal of approval on this change and laid down that "Civil Disobedience is the only civilised and effective substitute for armed rebellion." The country was asked to suspend all other activities and concentrate on Civil Disobedience. Then at Bardoli, the Working Committee, under the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, asked the country to suspend all aggressive activities and concentrate on the constructive programme. In view of these sweeping changes, suited to the altered circumstances, one need not attach much importance to arguments Nos. 1, 2, and 8.

2. We have failed to bring about such a complete boycott of the Councils as was contemplated by Mahatma Gandhi. The Nationalists being out of the way, it was a walk-over for the Moderates, and they took full advantage of the opportunity to fill the Councils. Mahatmaji hoped that the Moderates would resign as an overwhelming majority abstained from the polls. But in spite of a resolution to this effect in the Nagpur Congress and numerous meetings, and even special Conferences, the Moderates clung to their seats. The keeping of the Council chamber empty, which was the real object in view, was not only not achieved, but was virtually defeated by the entry of the very persons who ought not to have been there. We made the co-operation of others easy. To repeat it will be suicidal. For assuming that the Council cannot do any good, it cannot be denied that it can and is doing immense harm.

3. As to the item 7 above, the objections do not apply to merely contesting the elections and effectually preventing the co-operators from coming in. This question may be considered apart from the policy to be adopted after election. If we do not contest, we shall be out again for three years, in course of which many repressive measures affecting the daily life of the people will be enacted with the help of the so-called representatives of the people. Under these circumstances, it is a question for consideration how far the hold of the Congress over the masses can remain unaffected.

4. The policy of abstention seems to have lost its charm and it is not at all unlikely that a greater percentage of voters will poll at the ensuing elections, thus rendering nugatory the success of the Non-co-operation in 1920.

5. The oath of allegiance to the sovereign of England is not incompatible with Congress creed, so long as we do not definitely lay down "independence" as the goal of the Congress. A Non-co-operator, who secures his election to the Council with a distinct mandate from his constituency to obstruct the proceedings at every step, does not act improperly if he enters the Council with the avowed object of paralyzing it after giving an undertaking in the form, "I will faithfully discharge the duty upon which I am about to enter." For he can faithfully discharge the duty only by acting strictly in accordance with the mandate.

6. The proposed entry into Councils involves a change in the programme and should therefore obtain the sanction of the Congress. But it is not inconsistent with the principles of Non-co-operation. As a matter of fact it was not included in the original programme of Non-co-operation, and was not considered as an essential feature of it at the beginning.

7. The argument No. 6 would be valid if we intended

to co-operate with the Government ; rather it furnishes the strongest reason for our recommendation. We have silently watched the incarceration of our leaders and thousands of workers. An opportunity now presents itself to vindicate our national self-respect. We can carry the fight into the camp of the Government and tell them plainly that so long as our men are in jail, and other wrongs are not redressed, we refuse to co-operate with you. This would be the only dignified reply to terrorism and repression of the Government.

8. As regards objections Nos. 5 and 9, the evidence adduced before us strongly supports the belief that we shall be in a very substantial majority in all the Provinces if the Congress and Khilafat declare in favour of entering into the Councils.

9. The objection No. 10 ignores the elementary fact that there can be no greater paralysis of the system than Government by veto.

10. We are not only not making any progress in respect of constructive programme, but we are actually going backwards. But even if the constructive programme be pushed in right earnest, a substantial success, such as would win '*Swaraj*, would take a long time to come, and in the meantime 'the nation will have gone completely under.' Realizing this, the Ahmadabad Congress advised a resort to Civil Disobedience. That has failed ; nor is the country now prepared to embark upon general Mass Civil Disobedience. There is thus a stalemate. We must therefore have something else as nearly approaching Civil Disobedience as possible. While there is a general desire for that 'something' among those who are against entering into the Councils, no definite and workable suggestion has been made by any of them.

The publication of the Report of the Enquiry Committee in October, 1922, was followed by an acri-

monious discussion all over the country between the orthodox section of the Congress and those who favoured the entry into Councils. C. R. Das put his whole weight on the side of the latter and, with Pandit Motilal Nehru, became the recognized leaders of the new movement. The whole question was discussed at length in the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, held in Calcutta on November 20-24, 1922. "At the end of five days' analysis, criticism, invective and diatribe, the Committee resolved that the country was not prepared for Mass Disobedience", but it authorised P. C. C's to sanction limited Civil Disobedience. The harder question of Council-entry was held over for decision at the next session of the Congress.[94]

The annual session of the Congress was held in Gaya in a tense atmosphere (December 26, 1922). C. R. Das, in his Presidential Address, made a vigorous plea for Council-entry. "These Councils must," he said, "be either mended or ended. Hitherto we have been boycotting the Councils from outside. We have succeeded in doing much—the prestige of the Councils is diminished, and the country knows that the people who adorn those chambers are not the true representatives of the people. But though we have succeeded in doing much, these Councils are still there. It should be the duty of the Congress to boycott the Councils more effectively from within. Reformed Councils are really a mask which the Bureaucracy has put on. I conceive it to be our clear duty to tear this mask from off their face. The very idea of boycott implies, to my mind, something more than mere withdrawal. The boycott of foreign goods means that such steps must be taken that there may be no foreign goods in our markets. The boycott of the Reformed Councils, to my mind, means that such steps must be taken that these Councils may not be there to impede the progress

of *Swaraj*. The only successful boycott of these Councils is either to mend them in a manner suitable to the attainment of *Swaraj* or to end them completely. That is the way in which I advise the nation to boycott the Councils." Das then elaborated his views, answering the arguments against Council-entry. These more or less followed the line of discussion in the Report of the Enquiry Committee mentioned above. He emphasized the twofold aspects of the Non-co-operation movement. One was destructive and the other constructive, complementing each other and always going hand in hand ;— such as the boycott of schools and colleges on the one hand and establishment of national schools and colleges on the other ; the boycott of foreign goods and the spinning wheel and the looms on the other. "Judged by this principle," asked he, "what is wrong about the desire either to convert the Councils into institutions which may lead us to *Swaraj*, or to destroy them altogether ? The same twofold aspects of creation and destruction are to be found in the boycott of Councils in the way I want them to be boycotted."

The question was hotly debated both in the Subjects Committee and in the open session of the Congress. Rajagopalachari moved the resolution against Council-entry to which there were several amendments in the Subjects Committee. There were two different sections among the supporters of the Council-entry. Both agreed to contest the election, but while one held that the elected members should refuse to take the seats, the other wished to leave the question open to be decided by the next Congress. The first view was sponsored by Srinivasa Aiyangar, and the second by Motilal Nehru. After all the motions were moved, Madan Mohan Malaviya made a brilliant address lasting for an hour. He considered that the best way of proceeding forward was to enter

the Councils solidly and using that weapon to break the citadel of Bureaucracy.

Srinivasa Aiyangar's motion of contesting elections but not entering Councils was first put to vote but was lost, 107 voting for, and 139 against it. Rajagopalachari's motion that all voters shall abstain from standing as candidates for the Council and from voting for any such candidate was pressed to a division. It was carried by 203 votes against 87. In the open session of the Congress the resolution of Aiyangar was defeated by 1740 votes against 894 votes and Rajagopalachari's motion was carried by a large majority.

To complete the no-change programme, the Congress passed resolutions maintaining the boycott of Government and Government-aided and affiliated educational institutions, as well as the boycott of law-courts by lawyers and litigants. More important still was the following resolution : "The Congress calls upon all Congress-workers to complete the preparations for offering Civil Disobedience by strengthening and expanding the national organisations and to take immediate steps for the collection of at least Rs 25 lakhs for the Tilak Swarajya Fund and the enrolment of at least 50,000 volunteers satisfying the condition of Ahmadabad pledge by a date to be fixed by the All-India Congress Committee at Gaya"

The success of the orthodox or no-changer party seemed to be complete and there was a great jubilation in the Congress camp. But it was shortlived. For it was soon apparent that the Swarajya party would not take the defeat lying down but was determined to continue the fight.

### 3. Split in the Congress

The Congress concluded its session at Gaya on December 31, 1922, and the All-India Congress Committee met

next day, January 1, 1923. Before the business commenced, C. R. Das announced his resignation of the office of Congress President, and made a statement in explanation or justification of his action. The proceedings of the Congress, said he, convinced him "that there are at least two schools of thought with fundamental differences. I cannot accept and cannot associate myself with most of the resolutions passed in the last session of the Congress... I must therefore work with those who believe in my programme." He therefore considered it to be his duty to resign the Presidentship. But, he added, "I am not leaving the Congress in the conviction that I shall be able to convert the minority into majority at no distant date."

Shortly after this the pro-Councillors issued a manifesto forming and constituting themselves into a party within the Congress, called the Congress Khilafat Swaraj Party. It accepted the creed of the Congress, namely the attainment of *Swaraj* by all legitimate and peaceful means, and also the principle of non-violent Non-co-operation. C. R. Das was elected the leader, and Motilal Nehru, with three others, as Secretaries. The manifesto announcing the formation of the party was assented to by more than 100 persons including, among others, Hakim Ajmal Khan, V. J. Patel, N. C. Kelkar, Satyamurti and Jayakar.

The open defection of so many eminent leaders, including two stalwarts like Das and Nehru, marred the jubilation of the orthodox party over their triumph, for all reasonable men could foresee a split in the Congress camp. It was not long before this fear was realized. What was worse, the fight degenerated into an ignoble squabble. The gulf between the two parties, already wide enough, was further widened by intemperate and irresponsible utterances of the press. "Mutual recrimination

became the order of the day and motives concocted in editorial conclaves were gratuitously fathered upon the leaders." The bitterness engendered by the party quarrels filtered down to all sections of the people. The result was that very little was done to carry into effect the constructive programme adopted by the Congress. The orthodox party only agreed in opposing the Council-entry, but were sharply divided in their opinions. Some of them aimed at mass civil disobedience through constructive programme, while others preferred the *khaddar* and national education programme for its own sake. "It was soon found that party quarrels were much better employment for the leaders than an active effort to carry out the Congress resolutions."

In spite of the party squabbles, the leaders of the Swaraj Party showed great activity in organizing their newly formed party. They conducted a vigorous propaganda all over the country,—Nehru in Upper India, Patel in Bombay, and Das in Bengal, C. P. and South India. After this preliminary propagandas all over India they summoned a conference at Allahabad in March, 1923, and drew up the constitution of the Party and the plan of its campaign. The conference was followed by another series of propaganda tours by the leaders. Das stormed the citadel of orthodoxy in Madras, and his success there, while aggravating the bitterness between the two sections of the Congress, had its repercussions in other parts of the country. The success of the Swaraj Party spurred the orthodox party into activity, but they were seriously handicapped by the series of communal riots to which reference will be made later.

Early in February, 1923, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad made an attempt to bring about a compromise between the two sections of the Congress, and, after repeated failures, succeeded in making them agree to a truce till

April 30. The Council propaganda was to be suspended on both sides during the period, and both parties would be at liberty to work out the remaining items of their respective programmes. The compromise did not satisfy the extremists on either side, and at the end of the period each party accused the other of violating the terms of the compromise.

There was no doubt, however, that due to the propaganda of the Swarajists or other causes, the no-changers were gradually losing their hold over the country. Although the Working Committee consisted entirely of no-changers, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution in Bombay, in May 1923, that no propaganda be carried on amongst voters relating to the boycott of Councils. This raked up the bitter controversy of the earlier part of the year, and six prominent members of the Working Committee, including Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari, tendered resignation. The new members of the Working Committee, who took their place, did not belong definitely to either of the two parties. They represented a fairly large body of non-partisan congress-men who were seriously perturbed by the rivalry between the two warring sections within the Congress and tried to remove it by some sort of compromise. This party was able to assert itself at the meeting of the AICC at Nagpur. The AICC decided to suspend the operation of the Congress resolution boycotting the Councils and hold a Special session of the Congress to discuss the issue.

4. Rise of the Swaraj Party within the Congress.

The Special session of the Congress was held at Delhi on September 15, 1923. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who presided, advocated the policy of the Council-entry. But the real hero of the meeting was Muhammad Ali, who, after his two years in jail, was released on

August 29, 1923. He was the most popular leader next to Gandhi, and all the parties looked towards him for support. An orthodox Non-co-operator though he was, he realized the growing strength of the Swaraj Party led by Das and Nehru, and felt that the only statesmanlike policy was to permit the Swarajists to follow their own course to wreck the Councils without any hindrance from the Congress. It was a great diplomatic manoeuvre on his part to announce in the Congress that he had received a wireless message from Yeravda (the great prison where Gandhi was confined) in favour of lifting the ban on Council-entry. This had undoubtedly a great effect upon the audience, though it would perhaps be too much to assert that it alone decided the issue. Both the groups had mustered strong in the Congress meeting and indications were not wanting that the chances were in favour of the Swarajists. In any case a compromise resolution was adopted without any difficulty. It was worded as follows :

"While reaffirming its adherence to the principle of Non-co-operation this Congress declares that such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise the right of voting at the forthcoming elections, and this Congress therefore suspends all propaganda against entering Councils. The Congress at the same time calls upon all Congressmen to double their efforts to carry out the constructive programme of their great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, and by united endeavour to achieve *Swaraj* at the earliest possible moment."

It may be added, by way of anticipating events, that this resolution was reaffirmed at the regular annual session of the Congress held at Cocanada in December, 1923, though by that time the elections were over. The reversal of the Gaya resolution at Delhi reflects

great credit upon the leadership of Das and Motilal Nehru and great tribute must be paid to the energy and tenacity with which they carried on what appeared to many at the time to be a hopeless campaign. The action of Das, Nehru and their followers offers a striking contrast to that of the Moderates who seceded from the Congress on less vital issues and on less justifiable grounds.

Mahammad Ali's reference to the wireless message from Mahatma Gandhi roused a great deal of controversy, particularly after Srinivasa Sastri had announced that he had it from Gandhi himself that no such message was sent. Muhammad Ali, being accused of playing a hoax upon the no-changers and even of having deceived them, made a long statement to justify himself. It seems that Muhammad Ali told Devadas Gandhi, the son of the Mahatma, that the great leader being in prison and unable to address the nation in favour of his views, for this reason, if for no other, there should not be any change in the Council-entry programme. Devadas reported this to the Mahatma when he interviewed him later in jail. The Mahatma said that he was still in favour of continuing the triple boycott, but added that if, in the changed circumstances of the country, Muhammad Ali was himself convinced that a change of any sort was necessary, he was to follow his own convictions and must not permit any loyalty to him (Gandhi) to weigh with his decision.

After Devadas reported this to Muhammad Ali, the latter was confirmed in his interpretation of Mahatmaji's message by an article contributed by Mahadev Desai in the *Young India*. Muhammad Ali added : "Subsequently when I moved in the Subjects Committee the resolution for the removal of the ban on Council-entry, I repeated almost word for word what I heard from Devadasji."[95]

Even making due allowance for all the facts and

circumstances, Muhammad Ali's explanation does not appear to be quite satisfactory. In particular it is difficult to follow him when he says: "I certainly do not know of anyone who voted for my motion or abstained from voting against it because he understood that Mahatma Gandhi had sent a message asking the people to do so." What other consequence could possibly follow from his words, it is not easy to imagine.

After the ban on Council-entry was lifted by the Delhi Congress the real importance of the Non-co-operation movement centred round the Swaraj Party whose history will be discussed in the next Chapter. In the meanwhile we may trace the activities of the other section of the Congress who was against Council-entry and pinned its faith in the constructive programme. The activity of this section revived with the release of Gandhi early in 1924. Gandhi presided over the Belgaum Congress in 1924, and brought about a final reconciliation between his followers and the Swarajists. But he laid emphasis on the boycott of foreign goods, specially cloths traffic, based, as it was, on the ruins of India's millions. As an 'ancillary' to this he stressed the necessity of promoting hand-spinning and hand-weaving. He had no animus, he said, against the Swarajists and was ready to cling to them as a child clings to the mother. There was a frank and complete understanding between the two. The Swarajists agreed to his constructive programme and he agreed to their work in the Councils.

But Gandhi kept himself severely aloof from any active political work. He devoted his whole energy to the constructive programme. In addition to spinning, Gandhi directed his main attention to the uplift of Harijans ( untouchables ) and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity. His sincere efforts and personal example removed the thousand-year-old inertia of the Hindu society, and

a genuine movement to improve the condition of the lower classes and abolish untouchability stirred the whole country. No other single man had ever done so much to wash off this black stain from the Hindu Community, and the movement made remarkable progress.

In one respect, however, the constructive programme completely broke down. This was the Hindu-Muslim Unity which, along with the spinning and removal of untouchability, formed the three main planks of the constructive programme. The old feud between the two communities appeared again with renewed vigour, after the brief interlude of Non-co-operation-cum-Khilafat movement. Indeed the suspension of Non-co-operation movement almost immediately broke open the dam which had stopped the flow of communal passions, and they now swept in torrents the whole country for the next quarter of a century. This will be described in another Chapter.

# CHAPTER IV

# POLITICAL EVENTS (1921—1928)

## 1. REFORMS AT WORK

The new constitution was brought into operation in January-February, 1921. The Duke of Connaught, a son of Queen Victoria, was sent from Britain to inaugurate the Reforms. In accordance with the Congress resolution at Nagpur, his visit was boycotted by the people and placards were posted on the roadside carrying such words as "Boycott Connaught" "Remember Jallianwala," etc. On 9 February, while inaugurating the two imperial legislatures the Duke made a passionate appeal in the following words : "I have felt around me bitterness and estrangement between those who have been and should be friends. The shadow of Amritsar has lengthened over the fair face of India.......No one can deplore those events more intensely than I do myself......I appeal to you all, British and Indians, to bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to forgive where you have to forgive, and to join hands and to work together to realise the hopes that arise from today." Such an appeal was bound to fail and had not the least effect on the Indians.

The new Reforms could not be wrecked by the Non-co-operation movement, for the Moderates who were elected did not resign their seats on account of the smallness of the number of voters, as Gandhi hoped.[1] The Non-co-operators were, however, right in their assessment of the real value of the Reforms. For it did not

take the Moderates long to realize that neither the popular Ministry nor the Legislature with elected majority could exercise any effective authority in the administration of the country. Even after less than a year's experience, the new organization of the Moderates, the Liberal Party, in their annual conference described the Reforms as unsatisfactory and asked for full autonomy in the Provinces and popular control over the Central Government in all subjects except defence, foreign affairs, relations with Indian States, and ecclesiastical affair, at the end of two years. They also reiterated the view that India would not be satisfied unless adequate punishments were meted out to the Panjab delinquents. In these and other matters, such as the redress of Muslim grievances, condemnation of the repressive policy of the Government, etc., there was hardly any perceptible difference between the Moderates and the Non-co-operators.

Hemmed in between a hostile public and unsympathetic and unresponsive Government, the Liberal leaders would have found it hard enough to execute the task entrusted to them, namely to sow the seed of Responsible Government on Indian soil and nurse the tender plant, when grown, into maturity. But their task was made harder by the undisguised hostility of the Bureaucracy in India and the die-hard elements in England.

Mr. Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of Britain, revealed the real British policy in his famous speech in the Parliament on 2 August, 1922. He made it quite clear that "Britain will in no circumstances relinquish her responsibility to India," and that 'the British Civil Service must remain as the steel frame on which the whole structure of British administration in India must rest for ever.'

This gave a clear indication of the kind of Responsible Government which the British had in view for India.

Lloyd George's speech created almost a consternation in the ranks of the Moderates and strengthened the influence of the Non-co-operators. A resolution was moved in the Indian Legislative Assembly requesting the British Government to repudiate the statement of Lloyd George. The fact that in spite of the strong opposition by the Government such a resolution was passed in an amended form by 48 votes to 34, is an indication of the change effected by the Reforms. But the fact that it had not the least effect upon the British policy shows their hollowness.

Even apart from the utterance of Lloyd George, the Moderate leaders had already been disillusioned about the character of the Reforms by realizing the unpalatable truth that the I. C. S. still reigned supreme, and even the ministers had little or no control over them. One of the ministers very tersely explained their position in the following words: "Ministers occupy a position of responsibility without the power of freedom of action. The Act and the Rules made thereunder give power to the Secretaries and the Heads of Departments to take cases direct to the Governor who may overrule the Minister on the representation of the Head of the Department or the Secretary." The Section 52(3) of the Government of India Act lays down that "in relation to Transferred Subjects, the Governor shall be guided by the advice of his ministers unless he sees sufficient cause to dissent from their opinion." This clearly implies a consultation with the whole body of ministers and the Joint Parliamentary Committee emphasized the corporate responsibility of the ministers. But under the Rules which were prepared by the I. C. S., and not by the British Parliament, the Governor could violate the section 52(3) both in letter and spirit. He could, and as a general rule, did, consu t the ministers individually. The ministers complained bitterly

how they were overruled by the Governor even on petty matters. The ministers were completely under the control of the Governor, and as one of them put it, "it came to this that while the minister was responsible to the Legislative Council for his administration, it was the Governor who had the final decision on almost all questions, though he was very little in touch with the Council."[2]

It is thus quite clear that contrary to what was intended and expected, the Reforms gave the Governor more autocratic powers than before, and the ministers could only exercise as little or as much authority as the Governor allowed them at his discretion. But it was soon apparent that even apart from the illegitimate interference by the Governor, the ministers had no reason to feel that they were responsible to the people, through their representatives in the Council. As a substantial number of members in the Legislative Council were either officials or nominated by the Government or returned by special constituencies under the influence of the Government, the ministers could get a majority of votes in the Council even though a clear majority of the elected members was against them. It has been calculated, for instance, that in Madras if ministers could secure the votes of only 23 out of 86 members elected from General Constituencies (Hindu, Muslim and Christian), they would secure a majority of votes in the Legislative Council, if the Government wanted to retain them in power. Thus the ministers were really responsible, not to the people, but to the Government, through the Council which could maintain them in power even against the popular will. A glaring instance was furnished by a vote of Censure moved against the ministers in the Madras Council in 1927. The motion was defeated and the ministers continued, but the Division list showed that a clear majority of elected members voted against the ministry. As far back as 1923 it was admitted

by the Government that whips were issued to the officials and the supporters of the Government to vote for the Government and thus save the ministers. No wonder, therefore, that even the ministers themselves did not always recognize their responsibility to the Council. The Raja of Panagal gave out the bare truth when, opposing the vote of Censure in November, 1923, he said that 'he was responsible only to the Governor'. However amazing and incredible such a statement might appear, particularly when it comes from the Chief Minister of a Province, it serves to show that the so-called Parliamentary responsibility of ministers was nothing but a sham, at least in actual practice, as the effective authority rested not with the ministers but with the Governor whose actions could not be criticized by the Council.

Even the ministers, in their evidence before an official committee to inquire into the working of the Reforms, admitted that the system of Dyarchy had failed. There were, however, two redeeming features of the new constitution. In the first place, many of the ministers, even though severely handicapped, did their work with great ability and thus demonstrated, if such demonstrations were at all necessary, that the Indians were fully capable of carrying on the work of administration efficiently and with a full sense of responsibility.

Secondly, full use was made of the Legislatures by the elected members to elicit facts of public importance, and give forceful expression to public views and grievances. Although most of the important proposals could not be carried on account of the opposition of the official bloc, and even if carried, were vetoed by the Governor and Governor-General, it would be idle to deny that some grievances of the people were redressed. Reference may be made to the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923 which restored the democratic character of the

Calcutta Corporation after nearly a quarter of century ; the abolition of the special privileges enjoyed by the Europeans in criminal law against which the Indians carried on violent but unsuccessful agitations in 1849 and 1883 ;[3] modification of the repressive laws including the harsh press laws ; adoption of a scheme for imparting military training to Indian youths leading to the establishment of a military college at Dehra Dun ; laws for the amelioration of the lot of Industrial workers, and Indian labourers in the British Dominions and Crown Colonies ; and some measures, though inadequate, for improving trade and industry.

It is also significant that the political demands of the nationalists were now made from the floor of the Legislative Assembly Hall.

It is thus quite clear that contrary to expectations, and perhaps, also, the intention, of the framers of the Government of India Act of 1919, the Legislative Assembly exercised a great deal of effective influence on the Government of India and proved by far the most successful feature of the Reforms of 1919. Strange though it may appear, this was partly, if not mainly, due to the Non-co operation movement, which exercised a great deal of indirect pressure both on the Government and on the Liberal Party which co-operated with it. In order to take off the edge of the criticism that Reforms were a mere sham, the Government deliberately yielded on important demands, such as the revision of the repressive laws. As mentioned above,[4] the Government admitted to have adopted this policy as a measure of counter-propaganda against the Non-co-operation movement. The Liberal Party also had to stiffen their back and raise their demands, partly to rehabilitate themselves in the good opinion of their fellowmen, and partly to take the wind out of the sails of the Non-co-operators. But for the spectre

of the Non-co-operators swaying the whole country into a solid opposition bloc, the Government would not have gone out of its way to rally the Moderates and placate the people, extending the limits of concession as far as possible.

## II. THE SWARAJYA PARTY

The victory of the Swarajists at Delhi in September, 1923,[5] came not a moment too soon. The elections were due to be held in November and they had barely two months' time to make preparations. They issued a manifesto from Allahabad on October 14, 1923, explaining the policy and programme of the Party. They made it clear at the very outset that the Sawrajya Party was an integral part of the Congress and always kept in view the essential principles of Non-violent Non-co-operation as they understood them. The Party, on entering the Legislative Assembly, would demand the right of framing their own constitution, and if this be refused, and they constitute a majority, they would resort to a policy of "uniform, continuous, and consistent obstruction with a view to make Government through the Assembly and Councils impossible." The manifesto made it quite clear that for achieving their purpose they would try to secure the co-operation of the Nationalist members of the Legislatures who "without agreeing with the principles of non-co-operation, are in sympathy with the Party programme so far as it relates to Councils." The Party would also readily accept the invitation of other parties to join with them "for the purpose of defeating the Government on any non-official measure opposed by the Government or on an official measure opposed by the inviting party or members."[6]

The election broke the spell of inertia that had seized the country as a consequence of the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement in 1922. The whole country

rang with the exultant battle-cry of the Swarajists, and their success at the elections must be regarded as phenomenal in view of the very short period of time they had for preparation. The Swarajists practically routed the Moderate or Liberal Party. Even veteran leaders of this party like Surendra Nath Banerji in Bengal, Sheshagiri Iyer in Madras, and Paranjpye in Bombay were thoroughly beaten at the polls. The defeat of S. R. Das (Calcutta), Mr. Chintamani (U. P.), Hriday Nath Kunjru and others completed the debacle of the Moderates who henceforth ceased to count as an effective factor in Indian politics. The utter disorganization of the Party was clearly reflected in the poor attendance at the session of the National Liberal Federation held at Poona on December 26. The President of the sesion, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, ascribed the debacle of the Party at the recent election to lack of organization and failure to educate public opinion. But the plain truth seems to be that they had forfeited the confidence of the educated classes and had no influence upon the masses.

The success of the Swarajya Party varied in different Provinces. It had captured the majority of seats in C. P., but very few members of the Party were elected to the Legislative Councils of Madras and the Panjab. In Bengal the Swarajists formed the single largest party, though they did not command an absolute majority of votes. In Bombay, U. P., and Assam, the Swarajists were fairly strong ; no member of the Swarajya Party was set up for election to the Legislative Council in Bihar and Orissa, but the Nationalists were returned in large number.

In the Central Legislative Assembly, the total number of officials and non-officials nominated by the Government was, respectively, 25 and 14, forming practically a solid bloc of 39 votes under the control of the Government. Of the 105 members elected by the people, the Swarajists

numbered 48 and there was a group, under the leadership of Jinnah, consisting of 24 members, who called themselves Independent.

They held the key position as without their help neither the Swarajya Party nor the Government could hope to gain a majority. The Swarajists therefore, at the very outset, carried on negotiations with the Independents which led to the formation of the coalition that went by the name of the Nationalist Party. The coalition was based on the programme of presenting the national demand to the Government and to pursue a policy of obstruction and refusal of supplies in the event of the Government not making a satisfactory response thereto. This joint party programme was laid down definitely as follows :

"If the Government do not make a satisfactory response to the resolution demanding reforms within a reasonable time, the Party (Joint Party) will then be bound to a policy of obstruction and will put the policy into operation at the earliest period when the demands for grants are made by the Government, by refusing supplies, provided the party decide by a majority of three-fourths, at a meeting specially to be convened for the purpose, that the response, if any, made by Government is not satisfactory."

This policy worked remarkably well and the Joint Party achieved remarkable success. But the Independents soon changed their mind and were not prepared to join the Swarajists, to the full extent, in the policy of obstruction. The result was that though on some important occasions the Swarajists, with the help of the Independents, inflicted defeat upon the Government, they were defeated on many occasions when the Independents remained neutral, or some of them voted with the Government against the Swarajists.

When the fourth session of the Assembly opened

in Delhi in January, 1925, a revised rule was introduced by the Independents to the following effect : "In the event of the Party desiring to resort to a policy of obstruction including refusal of supplies or rejection of Finance Bills, no such decision shall be taken in the Nationalist Party unless both the Swaraj and Independent Parties have separately met in the first instance and decided at their respective meetings to make it a party question. If either group does not desire to resort to a policy of obsruction or of refusing supplies, the Nationalist Party shall not make it a Party question. In that event either group will be free to act as it may determine."

This practically meant a definite end of the coalition and made it impossible for the Swarajists to follow effectively their policy of obstruction. This was undoubtedly the main cause of their final decision to walk out of the Assembly, as directed by the Congress at the end of 1925.

It is unnecessary to give a detailed account of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly ; but a few facts may be noted to indicate the new spirit that animated the elected members.

On 8 February, 1924, Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Swarajya Party in the Assembly, moved by way of amendment to a motion already pending before the House that

"This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council to take steps to have the Government of India Act revised with a view to establish full Responsible Government in India and for the said purpose (a) to summon at an early date a representative Round Table Conference to recommend with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities, the scheme of a constitution for India, and (b) after dissolving the Central Legislature, to place the said scheme

before a newly elected Indian Legislature for its approval and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a statute."

The matter was discussed for full three days, namely 8th, 13th and 18th February, and Nehru's amendment was carried by 76 to 48 votes. This was the first great victory—an almost historical one—of the Nationalists or Swarajya Party-cum-Independents. This was shortly followed by other triumphs. When the Budget debate on the voting of demands was held on March 10, Nehru moved for the total omission of the grant under Customs. It was carried by 63 to 56 votes. Similarly the Assembly refused the demands under the heads Income-tax, Salt and Opium.

Next day Mr. Jinnah, the leader of the Independent Party, made it clear that they refused grants only to record their protest against, and condemnation of, the Government for refusing to grant reforms. But they had nothing to do with the wrecking programme of the Swarajists, and so, after having established the principle, they would discuss the other grants in the ordinary way. Nevertheless, the Finance Bill was thrown out by 60 votes against 57. Of course, the grants and Bills were certified by the Governor-General.

In the September session of the Legislative Assembly the Independent members were organised into a regular party of 28 members under the leadership of Jinnah. So the position of the Nationalist party formed by an alliance between the Swarajists and Independents became more secure and stable. The most important subject that came up for discussion before the Assembly was the consideration of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Superior Civil Services in India, generally known as the Lee Commission from the name of the Chairman, Lord Lee.

On September 10, 1924, the Home Member moved

a resolution to give effect to the chief recommendations of the Commission. The more important among these were the following :

1. That while the existing system of appointment and control of the All-India Services should, in present conditions, be maintained in Reserved fields, the Services operating in Transferred fields should, so far as future recruits are concerned, be appointed and controlled by Local Governments.

2. The recruitment of Indians for the Services in Reserved fields should be increased as recommended (direct recruitment of 40 Europeans and 40 Indians out of every hundred, the remaining being promoted from the Provincial Service so that there will be a half and half composition in 15 years).

3. The Constitution of a Public Service Commission.

4. That pay, passage, concessions and pensions be granted to the officers on the scale recommended (increase of basic pay in the Indian Police Service and the Indian Service of Engineers, privilege granted to European officers to remit his total overseas pay at two shillings to the Rupee, grant of four return passages to the European officers and their wives and one passage for each child, increased pension for the members of the I. C. S. serving as Member of Council or Governor).

Motilal Nehru moved a long amendment to the Government resolution of which the principal points were the following :

1. That the recommendations of the Lee Commission be not accepted.

2. That all further recruitment in England for the Civil Services in India be stopped.

3. That the powers of appointment and control of the Services now vested in the Secretary of State be transferred to the Government of India and the Local

Governments, shcn powers to be exercised under laws to be passed by the Indian and Local Legislatures.

4. That a Public Service Commission be established in India and the constitution and functions of that Commission be determined on the recommendation of a Committee elected by this Assembly.

5. That instead of accepting the recommendation number 4 of the Home Member's resolution, a Committee elected by this House should go into the entire question so far as the present incumbents are concerned.

There was a heated discussion in course of which Mr. Rangachariar pointed out that there was a revision of pay on the ground of high prices in 1919-20, when the prices had already reached the highwater-mark. and there was a total increase of over a crore in emoluments. Now that prices had fallen, they were asked to sanction a further increase costing another crore and a quarter. Col. Crawford remarked that the House was representative to some extent of the intelligentsia of India but it did not represent the voice of the people of India who desired to retain the European element in the Services. If the Pandit's amendment were carried, the House would show that it was not a civilised body. More than one speaker pointed out that the Services should be in the real sense Services, as they were in other countries, but must not be masters.

After two days' debate the amendment of Pandit Motilal Nehru was put to vote and carried by 68 votes against 46, on 12 September.

On 16 September Dr. Gour's Bill to repeal Part II of the Criminal Amendment Act of 1908 was passed by 71 votes against 31.

Although the Labour Government in Britain rejected the demand of the Swarajya Party for revision of Constitution, it was evidently at their instance that a Committee was appointed

in February, 1924, to inquire into the working of the Reforms. The Committee could not come to any agreement and there were two Reports. The Majority, consisting of five members, recommended only a few minor adjustments. The Minority Report, signed by four members, held that Dyarchy had failed and should be replaced by a Unitary and Responsible Provincial Government.

The Committee had verbal and written evidence from past and present Ministers and Executive Councillors from all the Provinces. With the exception of three disgruntled Ministers of Bengal who were driven out by the Swarajists in 1924, they all expressed the view, supported by reasons, that the experiment of Dyarchy has already taught all that it can be used to teach, that it is impossible to work it satisfactorily, that it is condemned, not only by themselves, who have tried to work it, and by all politicians of all Indian parties, but by an increasingly pronounced popular feeling, due to its failure to fulfil popular expectations.[7]

The Labour Government which was responsible for appointing the Committee fell before the Report of the Committee was submitted, and a Conservative Government took its place. It is significant to note in this connection that the Labour Party, at its Conference in Liverpool, in September, 1925, declared "its agreement with the conclusions of the Minority Report of the Indian Reforms Inquiry Committee," and that Lord Olivier, writing in December, 1925, associated himself entirely with the resolution passed by the Conference of the Labour Party at Liverpool.[8]

The Majority Report was condemned by all political parties and the Legislative Councils of Madras, Bombay, C.P. and the Panjab.

On September 7, 1925, the Report was discussed by the Legislative Assembly. After Sir Alexander Muddiman

moved for the acceptance of the Majority Report, Motilal Nehru moved a long amendment. After reiterating the demand contained in the resolution of February 18, 1924, it recommended some fundamental changes in the present constitutional machinery and administration of India. The more important of these were as follows :

1. The principle of responsibility to the Legislature shall be introduced in the Central Government subject to some reservation of powers to the Governor-General.

2. Unitary and autonomous Governments shall be established in the Provinces.

3. The Central and Provincial Legislatures shall consist only of members elected on a wide franchise.

4. The Indian army shall be nationalised within a rersonably short and definite period of time.

Finally, the Amendment recommended the appointment of a Convention, Round Table Conference, or other suitable agency to frame a detailed scheme on the above principles. After a full-dress debate for two whole days, the Amendment was carried on 9 September.

The Government of Bengal as well as the Government of India also suffered many defeats in connection with the notorious Bengal Ordinance issued in October, 1924, and the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 1925 which replaced it. Patel's Bill to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure was passed on 19 March, 1925.

The coalition of the Swarajists and the Independents which inflicted so many defeats on the Government in the Legislative Assembly broke down in the Budget Session of 1925, as mentioned above.

On 25 February, 1925, Nehru moved the rejection of the demand for the grant re expenses of the Railway Board, on the old principle that there should be redress of grievances before supply. Jinnah, the leader

of the Independent Party, announced that his party discussed the question and thought that the refusal of supplies was not a proper course.

On March 14 Motilal Nehru moved the omission of the whole demand for the Executive Council. It was, he said, a motion of censure on the Government of India, and the Swarajya Party would vote for it on the principle of the refusal of supplies before redress of grievances. After a prolonged discussion the motion was carried by 65 to 48 votes.9 But other demands were granted though the Swarajists opposed each of them. Pandit Motilal also opposed the Finance Bill and there was a passage at arms between him and Jinnah, who opposed the Swarajist "purpose of wrecking the present constitution." The Bill was passed.

Nevertheless, the Swarajya party scored a few more victories with the help of the Independent members.

On 26 January, 1926, the Assembly discussed the question of the release of political prisoners and the treatment accorded to them in jails. The main resolution was moved by Muhammad Shafi, but T.C. Goswami, a Swarajist member from Bengal, moved the following amendment :

"That this Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council—

(a) forthwith to secure the immediate release of all political prisoners detained without trial ;

(b) to take steps to remove all difficulties in the way of the return to India of Indian exiles in foreign countries who may be or may have been suspected of being concerned in any revolutionary or other activities regarded by the Government as prejudicial to the interests of India ; and

(c) to bring to trial under the ordinary law of the land such persons against whom the Government think

that they have sufficient evidence to go to court."

The Government opposed the amendment but it was carried by 53 against 45 votes.

On February 26, the Assembly passed a motion for the adjournment of the House to discuss the situation created by the hunger-strike among the Regulation and Ordinance prisoners in Mandalay jail, by 57 votes against 40.

This was the last victory of the Swarajya party in the Assembly. For, the Congress in its Kanpur session, held in December, 1925, had decided to boycott the legislature. So, after the Budget was introduced on 1 March, 1926, Pandit Motilal got up and announced that his party was under a mandate to walk out in view of the Government attitude over the Reform issue. He referred to the resolutions of the Kanpur Congress in December, 1925, and the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi on March 6 and 7, to which reference will be made later.[9a] He gave a short history of the demands for constitutional reforms made by the Assembly and the refusal of the Government to make even any conciliatory gesture. The Government passed repressive laws in the teeth of opposition of the Assembly by powers of certificate and there was also the Lee loot. "The co-operation we offered", said Motilal, "has been contemptuously rejected, and it is time for us to think of other ways to achieve our object". In conclusion he said: "There is no more use of us here. We go out into the country to seek the suffrage of the electorates once more. We do not give up the fight.........We feel that we have no further use for these sham institutions, and the least we can do to vindicate the honour and self-respect of the nation is to get out of them and go back to the country for work in the country. We will try to devise those sanctions which alone can

compel any Government to grant the demands of the nation. We hope and trust that the nation will give a suitable reply to the truculent rejection of our demands, and will send us again, in larger numbers with a stronger mandate, and God willing, with the mission of fulfilling its aspirations and enforcing its commands".

After Motilal's speech was over, he and all the Swarajist members walked out of the House in a body. It must be said that the concluding part of Motilal's speech, quoted above, is not only vague but somewhat self-contradictory. If there was no further use of these sham institutions, one might ask, then why again seek for election to them ? Nor is it easy to understand what is meant by a stronger mandate, or "those sanctions" which will compel Government to grant the demands of the Swarajya party. It is not, perhaps, an unreasonable conjecture that Motilal deliberately chose these vague expressions as the future course of action was not finally decided.

It was soon apparent that the interest, importance, enthusiasm, and excitement walked out of the Assembly along with the Swarajist members. Mr. Jinnah moved for the omission of the demand for the Executive Council in order that the House might record its unequivocal vote of censure on the Government policy with regard to the Reforms. Both he and Rangachariar denounced the Government for their policy in regard to Reforms and the refusal to accept the hand of co-operation which the Swarajists had extended to them. But Jinnah's motion was defeated by 47 to 31 votes in spite of his pathetic appeal to the nominated and non-official European members.

In spite of the unfortunate end of the Swarajya Party's activity in the Assembly there cannot be two opinions on the signal service they had rendered to the country.

For the first time the Legislative Assembly wore the appearance of a truly national Assembly, where national grievances were fully voiced, national aims and aspirations expressed without any reservation, and real character of the British rule through sham legislatures ruthlessly exposed. The British autocracy and Indian bureaucracy, in their naked form as agencies of tyranny and repression, stood exposed to the whole world. This, by itself, was no mean achievement, even though the Party could not continue this useful function during the whole life of the Assembly owing to the secession of the Independents. The stewardship of Pandit Motilal Nehru was fully vindicated, and the aims and aspirations of the Swarajya Party were fulfilled to a very large degree.

So far as the Provincial Governments are concerned the Swarajya Party had an absolute majority of votes in the C. P. Council. The Swarajists there, however, refused to accept the Ministry and forced the Ministers, appointed by the Governor, to resign by the wholesale rejection of the Budget. In Bengal the Swarajists had not an absolute majority in the Council, but formed the largest single Party. The Governor, Lord Lytton, asked C. R. Das, the leader of the Swarajya Party, to form the Ministry; but he declined and the Ministers were selected from among the non-Swarajist elected members of the Council. On 24 January, 1924, J. M. Sen Gupta moved the resolution that "all political prisoners of and belonging to Bengal, detained under Bengal Regulation III of 1818, be forthwith released." After a heated debate the resolution was passed by 76 to 45 votes. A similar resolution for releasing other political prisoners and another for repealing all repressive laws were also passed. The Swarajya Party, helped by some Independent members, both Hindu and Muslim, inflicted many defeats upon the Government, both in respect of demands for Grants, including Ministers'

salary, and unofficial resolution for extending the scope of Reforms. The Government, however, managed to win over some of the opposing members and thus thwarted the Swarajya Party. But the Ministers' salary being refused twice, they had to resign and the Governor assumed charge of the Transferred Departments.

No spectacular successes attended the efforts of the Swarajya Party in any Province, other than C. P. and Bengal. Still they occasionally scored some significant victories against the Government.

In accordance with the directions of the Kanpur Congress in December, 1925, the Swarajist members walked out of the Councils.

Almost immediately after the Swarajya Party joined the Legislature, Gandhi was released from prison on 4 February, 1924, on grounds of illness. He made no secret of the fact that he looked upon the Council-entry as incompatible with Non-co-operation. Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das saw him, but he was not convinced by their arguments. He issued a statement on 22 May, 1924, refusing to help the Swarajists, but in view of the Congress resolution in favour of the Council-entry advised the no-changers to keep themselves absolutely neutral and prove their own faith by prosecuting the constructive programme. Das and Nehru issued a counter-statement saying that they did not consider Council-entry as inconsistent with Non-co-operation, but even if it were so, they would sacrifice even Non-co-operation to serve the real interests of the country."[10]

But Gandhi was soon on the war path. He issued a statement to the effect that those who did not strictly follow the Congress resolution on boycott and Non-co-operation —i.e. members of legislature, practising lawyers, persons using foreign or mill-made cloth, teachers of Government schools, etc.— shall not be members of any Executive

Body of the Congress like A.I.C.C. and any local Executive Committee, though they might become ordinary members of the Congress. "The most natural thing for the Swarajists, therefore, is to work the constructive programme through their own organizations."

This very frank statement threw the country into a vortex of heated controversy which was brought to a head by the publication, on 19 June, 1924, of the four resolutions which Gandhi proposed to move in the next meeting of the A.I.C.C. in order to give effect to his idea of the reconstitution of the Congress organization.

The A.I.C.C. met at Ahmadabad on June 27, and after an unsuccessful effort to arrive at a compromise, Gandhi moved his first resolution to the effect that "all members, of various representative Congress organisations shall regularly spin for at least half an hour and send a specified quantity of yarn each month". There was a penal clause to the effect that any member failing to do so shall be deemed to have vacated his office.

As soon as Gandhi moved his resolution Nehru raised a point of order and argued that the resolution was against the Congress constitution. A heated debate took place and the President, instead of giving a ruling on the point of order raised, left it to the house to decide by vote. As 68 voted for Motilal and 82 against him, the discussion on Gandhi's resolution was taken up after the House re-assembled next day. Gandhi, in course of his speech while moving the motion, made the following significant observation, presumably with reference to Nehru's point of order. "If we feel", said he, "that we cannot possibly bring about Swarajya without trampling under foot the very constitution, it becomes our sacred duty to override and set aside that constitution. This is a time when we are justified in committing this breach in the constitution."

Pandit Motilal opposed Gandhi in a vigorous speech. "The Charka programme", he said, "was not going to bring them any the nearer toward Swaraj". He asked the supporters of Gandhi to tell him how much they worked his 'Constructive Programme' during his imprisonment. He asked them to put their hands on their hearts and 'tell us honestly' if they believed in the Charka programme during the Mahatma's absence. Continuing in the same strain, Motilal said : "We believe in the Constructive Programme, but we do not believe that by itself and without any other activity it will, or can, lead to Swaraj within a reasonable period of time……The Indian National Congress belongs as much to us as to the opposite party. We will not allow, if we can help it, the constitution to be changed according to the caprice of a narrow majority whenever it may think necessary to crush the minority. The demand that the Swarajists should go out of the Executive is, under the circumstances, an unreasonable demand, and it is only due to our self-respect that we must resist it."

In conclusion Motilal said : "We declare that the resolution under discussion is an unconstitutional contrivance, and we go away today only to return with a majority whose duty it will be to refuse its sanction to such unconstitutional attempts." With these words Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and their supporters, including Srinivas Iyengar, left the Hall in a body as a protest against the resolution of Gandhi.

The discussion continued, some opposing and some supporting the motion. An amendment to delete the penal clause was defeated and the main resolution was then put to vote. It was carried by 67 votes against 37.

The fact that even among the non-Swarajists there were 37 members who were opposed to him, had a great repercussion on the mind of Gandhi. Its immediate effect

was the deletion of the penal clause of the resolution. Gandhi himself proposed that "in view of the fact that the penalty clause of the resolution was carried only by 67 against 37 votes, and in view of the fact that the said clause would have been defeated if the votes of those who had withdrawn from the meeting were given against it, this Committee considers it proper and advisable to remove the penalty clause from the resolution, and to reaffirm the said resolution with the introductory clause."

This conciliatory gesture paved the way for an amicable settlement, and when the A.I.C.C. met next day, the third resolution of Gandhi was moved in a modified form. The original motion accepted by the Working Committee ran as follows : "In the opinion of the All-India Congress Committee it is desirable that Congress electors do not elect to the Congress organisations, practising lawyers, those who deal in or wear mill-spun cloth, parents and guardians sending their minor children to educational institutions under Government control, holders of Government titles, and members of legislative bodies, and the A.I.C.C. therefore requests such persons who are now members of the various Congress elective organisations to resign their places."

The compromise resolution which was actually moved ran thus :

"The All-India Congress Committee draws the attention of the Congress voters to the fact that the five boycotts, namely, of all mill-spun cloth, Government law courts, educational institutions, titles and legislative bodies, except in so far as they may have been affected by the Cocanada resolution, are still part of the Congress programme and, therefore, considers it desirable that those Congress voters who believe in the Congress programme do not elect to the various Congress organizations those who do not believe in carrying out, in their own person, the said

five boycotts, except where affected by the said Cocanada resolution, and the A.I.C.C. therefore requests such persons who are now members of the Congress elective organisations to resign their places."[11]

In spite of the efforts of a class of no-changers to delete the reference to the Cocanada Congress resolution, the compromise resolution was passed.

The difference between the two resolutions shows that Gandhi had practically given up the fight against the Council-entry, so far at least as it had any bearing on the Congress organization.

There was a strenuous fight over two other resolutions moved by Gandhi, one condemning the action of Gopinath Saha who had murdered a European, and another proposing that the resolution No. 3, already passed, should not apply to litigants before a Court. In the first case C. R. Das moved, by way of amendment, the resolution passed by the Bengal Provincial Conference at Sirajgunje on 1 June, 1924, which was denounced by the Englishmen in India and even in the House of Commons. It ran as follows: "This Committee, while denouncing and dissociating itself from violence and adhering to the principle of non-violence, appreciates Gopi Nath Saha's ideal of self-sacrifice, misguided though it is, in respect of the country's best interest, and expresses respect for his self-sacrifice." The amendment was lost by only eight votes,—78 votes against 70.[12] As regards the second, the motion was ruled out of order by the President, at the instance of Dr. Choitram

The proceedings of the A.I.C.C. meeting moved Gandhi to the depth of his heart and proved a great shock to him. He was grieved, he said, "to see his own immediate followers so shaky and so hypocritical". He observed that 'when Dr. Choitram rose to a point of order it was like a thrusting of dagger in his heart'.

According to a contemporary account, "with these words the great leader collapsed, and after recovering consciousness spoke of retiring from the Congress."

Gandhi wrote two articles in the *Young India* under the captions "The A.I.C.C." and "Defeated and Humbled" He summed up the lessons of the A.I.C.C, meeting as follows :

"I had a bare majority always for the four Resolutions but it must be regarded by me as a minority. The House was fairly evenly divided. Copinath Saha Resolution clinched the issue. The speeches, the result and the scenes I witnessed afterwards—all was a perfect eye-opener. I undoubtedly regard the voting as a triumph for Mr. Das although he was apparently defeated by eight votes. That he could find 70 supporters out of 148 who voted had a deep significance for me. It lighted the darkness, though very dimly as yet."

But the articles also broadly hinted that Gandhi would not give up the fight against the Swarajists and "must strive for a majority in the next Congress"

But suddenly Gandhi's ideas underwent a radical change. He felt an imperative need of closing the ranks not only within the Congress but also outside it among all other political parties. He evidently realised the serious consequences of the divisions in the country, among no-changers and Swarajists, among Hindus and Muslims, and between the Congress and the other political parties. "Our non-co-operation," said he, "has taken the form of non-co-operation in practice with one another instead of with the Government." In a speech at the Excelsior Club, Bombay, on 31 August, 1924, he said : "There was no reason why we could not find a common denominator of action. There must be some things on which we could all unite and for the prosecution of which we could all meet under the same roof."

Gandhi began his work by arriving at a settlement with the Swarajists. This was hastened and facilitated by the terrible campaign of repression in Bengal inaugurated by the New Ordinance of October. After three days' discussion in Calcutta an agreement was reached between Gandhi on one side and Das and Nehru on the other. Its chief provisions were as follows :

1. The Congress should suspend the programme of Non-co-operation except in so far as it relates to the refusal to use or wear cloth made out of India.

2. Different classes of work of the Congress may be done by different sections within the Congress.

3. Spinning and weaving, removal of untouchability and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity should be carried on by all sections within the Congress, and the work in connection with the Central and Provincial Legislatures should be carried on by the Swarajya Party on behalf of the Congress and as an integral part of the Congress organisation; and for such work the Swarajya party should make its own rules and raise and administer its own funds.[13]

The change in Gandhi's attitude was shortly followed by that of C.R.Das. On 25 March, 1925, he issued a statement condemning all acts of violence for political purposes, without reserve, and in words which even Gandhi could hardly improve upon.

This manifesto was acclaimed as a new gesture not only by the Anglo-Indian Press, but even by the Government. In course of the debate on the Bengal Ordinance in the House of Lords on March 31, the Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead, referred to it in appreciative terms and observed : "I invite Mr. Das—and I have not used in the course of this debate a harsh word about him—to take a further step. I ask him to go forward and co-operate with the Government in repressing the violence which he deprecates." On April 3,

Das issued a statement regarding Lord Birkenhead's remarks. He was not only willing but anxious, said he, to devote the rest of his life to eradicate violence, but his efforts were bound to be ineffective unless a favourable atmosphere was created by the Government, by removing those dep-rooted causes of political and economic discontent of which the revolutionary and violent activities are mere symptoms. The moment the revolutionaries feel "that at any rate the foundation of our freedom is laid by the Government, I venture to assert that the revolutionary movement will be a thing of the past. I suggest in all humility that there should be a distinct and authoritative declaration by the Government at the earliest opportunity."

On April 6 it was stated by the Under-Secretary in the House of Commons that "if, as he (Lord Birkenhead) hopes, Mr. Das now makes constructive proposals which obtain the support of the Government of Bengal and the Government of India, His Majesty's Government, so far as they are concerned, will give such proposals their sympathetic consideration."

On May 2, Das outlined his policy in his Presidential speech at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Faridpur. He defended the ideal of Dominion Status as against independence. He also offered co-operation with Government on the following terms :

"In the first place, the Government should divest itself of its wide discretionary powers of constraint, and follow it up by proclaiming a general amnesty of all political prisoners. In the next place the Government should guarantee to us the fullest recognition of our right to the establishment of Swaraj within the Commonwealth in the near future, and that in the meantime, till Swaraj comes, a sure and sufficient foundation of such Swaraj should be laid at once."

It is evident that Das extended the hand of fellowship to the Government even by sacrificing some of the cherished principles of his party. As a matter of fact, the speech of Das created great discontent among a section of his followers and it was openly talked about that it was the result of a secret negotiation between Das and the Government. Even Gandhi had to publicly defend Das against all such accusations, and was at pains to point out that "if they scratched Mr. Das, he knew they would find the same man desiring deliverance for his country." Gandhi observed : "After they had made the choice of their leader, like Sita they should fall into the fire with him and all would be well."

It is very likely that some activities were going on behind the scene. Fortunately Subhas Bose, who was in the confidence of Das, has thrown some light on the whole episode. He definitely states that Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal, opened negotiations with Das, and "these negotiations went on for some months" on the basis of Dominion Status. In view of the great importance of the matter we may quote a long extract from the account of Subhas Bose.

According to Bose Das attended the Bengal Provincial Conference at Faridpur in order to demonstrate to the Government that he would be able to rally the Congressmen round him. So, in his Presidential speech, Das "discussed the question of Dominion Status *v.* Independence as the goal of the Congress, and declared that he stood for the former. Moreover, he spoke in condemnation of terrorism. The speech as a whole appeared to be an appeal to the Government and to the more extreme elements among the Indians to adopt a compromising attitude so that the ground could be prepared for a settlement. It was, however, not welcomed by the youthful section of the audience and there was a possibility that he would be defeated when the matter was put to the

vote. Nevertheless, so great was his personal influence at the time and so transparent his sincerity of purpose that he carried the day. The deliberations of the Faridpur Conference were on the whole satisfactory to the authorities with whom the Deshabandhu was engaged in negotiating.

"Soon after this, Lord Reading left India for London, as the Conservative Cabinet and the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, wanted to consult him. By that time it was in the air that negotiations had been going on between Deshabandhu Das and the Government, though hardly anyone knew any details. It was announced that after consulting Lord Reading, Lord Birkenhead would make an important pronouncement about India. Everyone in India awaited his speech with the greatest interest and eagerness."[14]

Then there was a bolt from the blue. In June Deshabandhu Das, who was having a rest in the hill-station of Darjeeling, fell seriously ill. After a brief attack he suddenly died on 16 June, 1925.

According to Subhas Bose the death of Das induced the British Government to change its mind; the official pronouncement, carefully prepared by Birkenhead on behalf of the Cabinet, and announced to be made on 7 July, 1925, was suppressed. and a non-committal speech was made instead on that day. The Government of London, relieved for the time being by the death of their chief adversary, refused to grant concession in a hurry and once more fell back on the policy of 'watch, wait and see.'[15]

The death of C. R. Das and the speech of Birkenhead brought about further reconciliation between Gandhi and the Swarajists. This was indicated by the following resolution of the A.I.C.C. :

"That the Congress now take up and carry on all

such political work as may be necessary in the interest of the country, and for this purpose do employ the whole of the machinery and funds of the Congress... provided that the work in the Legislatures shall be carried on by the Swarajya Party under the constitution framed by the party and the rules made thereunder, subject to such modifications made by the Congress as may be found necessary from time to time for the purpose of carrying out the said policy." There was, however, one important departure. A separate autonomous organization was set up under the name of All-India Spinners' Association for the development of hand-spinning and *khaddar*. It was a permanent organization under a Council of its own with a constitution laid down by the A.I.C.C. ; and funds and assets of the Congress, which were earmarked for this body, were specifically excluded in the above resolution from those available for political purposes. In other words, the position of the Swarajya Party *vis à vis* the Congress was now reversed ; the party and its politics now became the main concern of the Congress, and the constructive programme was relegated to a separate non-political organization within the Congress. This was further emphasized by changing the franchise of the Congress membership, the annual subscription of four annas being restored as an alternative qualification to spinning, in modification of the decision of the Belgaum Congress.

But ere long there was a split in the Swarajya party, as a prominent section of it was in favour of adopting the policy of Responsive Co-operation—the old policy of Tilak.

In the annual session of the Congress, held at Kanpur on 25 December, 1925, Sarojini Naidu presiding, Pandit Motilal Nehru moved a resolution outlining the future political programme of the Congress which now meant, of course, also of the Swarajya Party. It sought

to confirm the decision of the A.I.C.C. at Patna, and reiterated the faith in Civil Disobedience as the only effective weapon ; but in view of the fact that the country is not now ready for it a comprehensive programme of work both inside and outside the Legislatures was laid down. The directions to the Swarajya party were as follows :

'The party shall wait till the end of February for a decision of the Government on the demands for constitutional reforms set forth in the resolution passed by the Assembly on February 18, 1924. If no satisfactory reply be received by that date, the Swarajist members of the legislatures shall walk out, though provision was made for attendance on special occasions.'

Malaviya moved an amendment to the resolution which sought to omit the clause relating to Civil Disobedience and lay down the following programme. "That the work in the Legislatures shall be so carried on as to utilize them to the best possible advantage for early establishment of full responsible government, co-operation being resorted to when it may be necessary to advancement of the same cause."

Jayakar, who seconded this amendment, dramatically announced at the very outset that he, Kelkar and Moonje had resigned their seats in the Legislatures as they could not subscribe to the policy of the Swarajya Party. He said that either they must come out of the Councils altogether, or, being in, "take the last juice out of it by occupying every place of power, initiative and responsibility and would give no quarter to the Bureaucracy."

The amendment was, however, lost and Nehru's rsolution was passed by a large majority.

The All-India Congress Committee met at Delhi on March 6 and 7, 1926. As no satisfactory response was made by the Government to the demands for constitutional refoıms the Swarajist members in the Assembly

were directed to leave their seats on March 8, after moving for the rejection of the first demand for grant. The A.I.C.C. then laid down the programme and principles for the next general election, more or less on the same lines as before.[16]

In the meantime the revolt of the Responsive wing of the Swarajist party was complete. The resignation of Jayakar, Kelkar, and Moonje was followed by an open declaration of the Swarajist members of the Bombay Council against the programme of the Party, and the Berar members resigned from the Swarajya party as a whole. The Responsive Co-operators held a Conference at Akola on February 14 and 15, under the chairmanship of Jayakar, formed a new party named "The Responsive Co-operation Party", drew up a manifesto, and adopted a resolution expressing disagreement from the policy laid down at the Kanpur Congress as it was ineffective either to obstruct the machinery of the Government or to advance the interests of the people.[17]

The revolt of Jayakar and his followers against the Swarajya Party soon merged itself into a general rally of all political parties outside the Congress round "Responsive Co-operation." Malaviya, who unsuccessfully opposed the walk-out resolution at the Kanpur Congress in December 1925, resigned from the Independent party on 22 February, 1926, in order to bring together all Nationalists under a new party with the progarmme of Responsive Co-operation, and expounded his views in public meetings held at Delhi on 25 March, and at Lahore on the next day. About the same time, more than one hundred persons belonging to all political organizations, except the Swarajya Party, issued a manifesto on 24 March, 1926, inviting all to attend a Conference in Bombay on 3 April in order to inaugurate a new organization to be called the Indian Nationalist Party which will follow the method of Responsive Co-operation.

The Conference was attended by about 125 members representing Liberals, Independents, Responsive Co-operationists, Nationalists and Conventionists. It brought into existence a new party called 'Indian National Party.' It adopted Dominion Status as its goal, excluded mass civil disobedience and general non-payment of taxes from its programme, and laid down Responsive Co-operation as its method of work in the Legislature.[18]

On 23 June, 1926, a meeting was held in Calcutta to organize a party within the Congress which would work the Responsive Co-operation programme. The meeting was presided over by B. Chakravarti and addressed by Malaviya. A conference of the party was held on 28 August.[19]

By the end of July, 1926, the most influential section of the members of the Legislative Council in C. P. seceded from the Congress and a statement was issued under the signature of Raghavendra Rao, Leader of the Swarajya Party in the C. P. Legislative Council, that unless and until Congressmen are returned in a majority in at least two of the major Provinces, C. P. alone should not be harnessed to a programme of obstruction.

Lajpat Rai tendered resignation from the Swarajya party on 24 August, 1926. Malaviya made a last effort to unite the different sections of the Congress and called a Conference for the purpose at Delhi on 11 September, 1926. Motilal's party wanted both Responsivists and Independent Congressmen to accept the Congress pledge and thereby enable the forthcoming elections to be run by one united party leaving the question of policy and programme to be adopted in the Legislatures for decision by the next Congress in Assam in December. The Responsivists and Independent Congressmen did not agree to this ; they formed a coalition party known as the Independent Congress Party, formed of those members who did not agree with the Congress policy and programme within the Legislature.

It was decided to form a central board which would define a common policy and run candidates for election to the Legislatures. The Party issued a manifesto on 28 September, 1926, laying down the policy and programme on the basis of Responsive Co-operation.

For the Swarajya party the hour was dark indeed, and the position was rendered worse by the communal dissensions to which reference will be made later. The election of 1926 was held under the shadow of grave communal disturbances and their political reaction went definitely against the Congress. A strong section of the Muslims made a propaganda against Non-co-operation, and a section of the Hindus felt that if the Hindus non-co-operated while the Muslims co-operated with the Government, the Hindus would be placed at a great disadvantage. The inordinate length to which leaders like C. R. Das and Lajpat Rai were prepared to go to propitiate the Muslims, as evidenced by their proposed pacts, to be mentioned later, gave rise to a general feeling that the Hindu interests were not safe in Congress hands.

The Congress, i. e. the Swarajya party, suffered heavy losses in the election of 1926. In the Legislative Assembly they gained notable successes only in Bengal and Madras. Most of the members, returned in Bihar and Orissa on the Congress ticket, were really Responsivists. In C. P. and U. P. the Swarajists got only one member each, and in Bombay, two.

The results of elections to the Provincial Councils were equally or still more disastrous to the Swarajists. In U.P, their number went down from 31 to 19, and in C.P. from 44 to 15. The Panjab had only two Swarajist members, and Bombay, eleven.

The election results had evidently some effect on the Congress. In the Gauhati session the walk-out policy of Kanpur was given up and the old policy was resumed,

It was, however, definitely laid down that "the Congressmen shall refuse to accept Ministership or other offices in the gift of the Government and oppose the formation of a Ministry by other parties until a satisfactory response is made by the Government to the National Demand." The result of the election showed that while among the Hindus the loyalty to the Congress generally triumphed over communal interests, the Muslims had, generally speaking, returned reactionary elements dominated by communal considerations, and not nationalists, as they had done in 1923. The strength of the Congress Hindu bloc was, however, weakened by the success of the Responsivist Party. Thus the United Swarajya Party in the Legislatures of 1923 gave place to three distinct groups, namely, the Swarajists, Responsivists and Communal Muslims. Its effect was clearly perceptible in Central Provinces and Bengal where Swarajya Party in 1924 had scored its greatest triumphs by forcing the Ministers to resign. Thanks to the Responsivist Party in C. P., and the Muslim members in Bengal, the Ministries in both these Provinces were kept on the saddle by 1926 election. In some Provincial legislatures like those of Bihar and Madras, the number of Congress members in 1926 showed an increase over those of 1923, but nowhere could they gain sufficient strength to inflict defeat upon the Government. As a political power, the Swarajya Party proved to be a spent force.

In the Budget session of the Legislative Assembly for 1927, Mr. Jayakar renewed the old campaign by moving rejection of the demand for grant under the head—Expenses of the Governor-General's Executive Council. But though the motion was carried, it failed to receive solid support from the Muslim members. It was clearly evident from the debates that the nationalist ideas had been sacrificed to communal interests. The Muslim

members veered round more and more to the communal electorate and even held the view that Swaraj without communal representation and adequate safeguarding of Muslim interests was not worth having. On the other hand, even progressive nationalist Hindus firmly refused to have Swaraj at the cost of conceding excessive and unreasonable concessions to communal demands which cut at the very root of nationalism. This fundamental difference broke down the common national front which Non-co-operation movement had brought into being. The Indian politics lost life and vigour and once more flowed into the narrow groove of communal channels.

The British Government correctly gauged the situation and no longer felt any need to placate public opinion.

## III. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE CONGRESS.

### 1. Different Political Parties.

Reference has been made above to the complete rout of the Moderate or National Liberal Party at the election held at the end of the year 1923. The number of delegates at the two annual sessions of the National Liberal Federation showed that the Party as such had little following in the country. But the Party counted among its members a very large number of eminent political leaders who still exercised great influence on the political movement of the country. These included, among others, Srinivasa Sastri, Annie Besant, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Khaparde, Dr. Gour and B.C. Pal.

There were two Hindu organizations which, but for their communal character, might have been regarded as branches of the Congress and the National Liberal Party. These were, respectively, the Hindu Mahasabha and the All-India non-Brahmin Federation. The non-Brahmins

formed the Ministry in Madras and successfully carried on the administration. Their political views coincided more or less with those of the Moderates or Liberals. The Hindu Mahasabha started as an organization for social reforms but gradually drifted into politics in order to safeguard the interests of the Hindus as against Muslims, and combat the tendency of the Hindu leaders to appease the Muslims by surrendering the legitimate right of the Hindus.[19a] They held very strong views against the communal electorate and weightage given to the Muslims. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the great representative of the Hindu community, and the ablest spokesman of the Mahasabha, referred to its activity in another direction which irritated the Muslims and gave rise to great misgivings even in the mind of the Hindu leaders. "For centuries", said Malaviya, "Muhammadans had been converting Hindus, and the majority of the Muslims of India were converts. Numerous Christian missions were also carrying on a campaign of proselytisation. Therefore the question of having a Hindu Mission for proselytisation had become a very pressing necessity in the situation created in this country by the activities of Muslim and Christian Missions."

The All-India Khilafat Committee became *functus officio* after the Turkish Government of Kemal Pasha deposed the Sultan, abolished the institution of the Caliphate, and declared Turkey a secular State in March, 1924. So the All-India Muslim League again entered the political field.[19b]

The beginning of the Communist Party may also be traced to this period. Although the influence of Communist idea made itself felt in India shortly after the Russian Revolution in 1918 and attempts were made to organize a Communist Party in India by M. N. Roy and others since 1921, no conspicuous success attended their efforts till the Communist Party of Great Britain took up the matter and sent

some agents to India in 1926.

Philip Spratt was the most successful among these foreign agents. When he arrived in India in December, 1926, there were hardly a dozen members of the Communist Party, though it had been formally started about a year and a half before. But Spratt worked with great vigour. The following lines fairly sum up his activity.

"During those early days Spratt's hand was everywhere. He planted the seeds of revolt in the Punjab. It was Spratt's untiring energy that brought into being a Workers' and Peasants' Party in the United Provinces, which held its inaugural conference at Meerut in October 1928. Within a month, branches had been formed in Delhi, Meerut, Gorakhpur, Jhansi and Allahabad. Spratt worked in 1927 mainly with the Bombay group, in 1928 with the Bengal Party. He played a large part in uniting the Punjab groups into one Party, and in the formation of those in the United Provinces, into another."

The activity of the Communists was, however, cut short by the wholesale arrest of their leaders on 20 March, 1929. The following findings of the Court fairly sum up the history and activities of the Communists in India :

"It has been definitely proved that (1) the Communist International was founded in 1919, with its headquarters at Moscow, as the supreme head of all Communist organisations throughout the world ; (2) its chief aim is to establish Workers' Republics in every country ; (3) for this purpose it has as its fixed policy the exciting of violent revolution in all countries ; (4) in particular it has turned its attention to India and determined to cause a revolution which has for its immediate object the overthrow of the sovereignty of the King Emperor in British India ; (5) with this object it has formed a conspiracy with persons and bodies in Europe and India

and elsewhere to excite the Indian workers and peasants to revolution ; (6) these persons and bodies, who may be called conspirators, have laid down a general plan of campaign under the direction of the Communist International ; (7) this plan includes the formation of such bodies as a Communist Party of India and Workers' and Peasants' Parties ; (8) the immediate work of these parties is to gain control of the working classes by organising them in Unions, teaching them the principles of Communism, inciting them to strikes in order to educate them and teach them solidarity, and in every way to use every possible method of propaganda and instruction ; (9) the workers are thus to be taught mass organization with a view to the declaration of a general strike followed by revolution ; (10) the peasants are to be organised in a similar manner so as to form an effective reserve force for the proletarian masses and to effect an agrarian revolution ; (11) in pursuance of these aims a Communist Party of India and four Workers' and Peasants' Parties, in Bombay, Bengal, the Punjab and the United Provinces, were formed ; (12) these bodies were given financial aid from Moscow and their policy was dictated from Moscow, directly and via England and the Continent, through communications conducted in a secret and conspiratorial manner ; (13) in addition to this, several persons, such as Allison, Spratt and Bradley were sent out to India for the express purpose of organising the work and fomenting revolution ; (14) in pursuance of these directions and with the financial help thus obtained, these bodies have organised unions, conducted demonstrations, edited papers, instituted youth movements, initiated and conducted strikes, and used all posssible methods of propaganda ; (15) in these activities all the accused, with the exception of Dharamvir Singh, are shown to have taken part with full knowledge and

approval of their aims and objects and directly or indirectly in league with the conspirators outside India."

There is a general consensus of opinion that these findings make a fair approximation to truth. Even Communist leaders did not dissent from them except on one point. Spratt dissented from the last finding, no. 15. "According to him, almost half the accused were nationalists or trade unionists who were largely ignorant of the real nature of the conspiracy and of its underhand methods. When those were revealed during the trial, they were taken aback. The demoralisation and quarrels among the prisoners during the later stages of the trial could partly be attributed to this factor."[20]

After a protracted trial 27 accused persons were found guilty and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment on 16 January, 1933. The High Court considerably reduced the sentences, and by 1935 all the accused were set free.

## 2. The Commonwealth of India Bill.

The most important political activity, outside the Congress, was the Conference of the elected members of the Central and Provincial legislatures in February, 1923, at Delhi, which drew up the outline of a constitution for India on the basis of Dominion Status. A second Conference in February, 1924, approved of it and merged itself into a Convention which met in April, 1924. It consisted of members and ex-members of the Legislatures, Central and Provincial (231), the members of the Council of the National Home Rule League (19), the elected representatives of the political sections of the 1921 clubs in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta (3), the co-opted representatives of the Indian Women's Association (2), and the late Law Member of the Governor-General's Council,—256 in all. The Convention drafted the Commonwealth of India Bill. A Deputation, consisting of Mrs. Besant and Sastri, left for U. K. on 26 April, 1924,

and another on 10 May, to press the Home Rule campaign there, on behalf of the National Convention. The members of the Deputation and several other eminent Indians who were already in London, carrying on propaganda on behalf of India, submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of State.

The Deputation addressed several meetings and there were select gatherings, private dinner to the Secretary of State by a fully representative gathering of Indians, and various other functions. Speeches were made by Sastri, Besant, Lajpat Rai and others. The Prime Minister saw Lajpat Rai, Harkishen Lal, and Besant, and had long talks with them. There was a crowded meeting at the Queen's Hall presided over by Mr. Robert Smillie, M.P., Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party. He believed, he said, "that at last the majority of British people believed in India's right of self-government. He knew that the majority of the rank and file of the supporters in the House of the Government desired to confer that right upon India and he believed that the majority of the Cabinet agreed with them." Another successful demonstration was held in Birmingham on 27 June, and there were many other meetings in which Indian leaders spoke. At a meeting at the Caxton Hall, attended mostly by Indian students, Mrs. Besant, the speaker, was questioned about the right of herself and Sastri to represent any considerable section of the Indian people. The interrogators advocated armed force as the only effective method of turning the British out of India, notwithstanding Besant's protest.[21]

On her return from England, early in September, 1924, Mrs. Besant made an attempt to establish unity among different political parties in India. Gandhi had also realized the need of such unity and had already made up his differences with the Swarajists and restored the unity of the Congress. He also elaborated his

ideas in a long article in the *Young India* on 11 September. To give a definite shape to this idea Muhammad Ali, as President of the Congress, invited representatives of all parties to meet the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on November 21 and 22. There was a good response to this invitation and nearly four hundred delegates representing different shades of public opinion met at the Muzaffarabad Hall, Bombay. It was a great tactical move on the part of Muhammad Ali to resign his claim to preside and propose instead that Sir D.M. Petit should take the chair. In his opening speech Gandhi said that they had gathered together not to emphasize points of difference but to understand and find out points of agreement. One of these was some action in connection with the extraordinary Bengal Ordinance. He thought there should be no difficulty in coming to a unanimous decision on the repression that was going on in Bengal. He therefore proposed that the Conference should appoint a representative Committee to draft a resolution for its discussion. Mrs. Besant spoke at great length justifying the Bengal Ordinance, but Gandhi's resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority.

The draft of the resolution prepared by the Committee ran as follows : "A. While firmly of opinion that anarchical organisations can never secure Swaraj to the people of India, and while disapproving and condemning most emphatically such organisations, if any, this Conference, representing all classes and communities in India and every variety of public opinion, views with the strongest disapproval and condemns the action of the Governor-General in promulgating the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance of 1924, as such an extraordinary measure, being a direct invasion upon individual liberty, should not have been enacted without the sanction of the Legislature, and as it easily lends itself at the

hands of the Executive to grave abuses resulting in implicating innocent persons and in interfering with constitutional political activity, as past experience of similar measures has repeatedly demonstrated. B. This Conference urges the immediate withdrawal of the Ordinance and the trial, if necessary and in accordance with ordinary law, of the persons cetained under it. C. This Conference further urges that Regulation III of 1818 which gives the Government powers of arresting and confining persons suspected of public crimes without warrant, without trial and without statement of reasons for such arrest and confinement, should be forthwith withdrawn. D. The Conference records its conviction that the present political situation in India is due to denial of just rights long overdue to the people and that the speedy establishment of Swaraj is the only effective remedy therefor."

The resolution was moved by Chintamani, an eminent leader of the Moderate Party, and for some time a Minister in U.P. It was a unique occasion, since the split of 1918, when once more India placed her political demands from a common platform. The first two parts—A and B—of the resolution being put to vote were carried by an overwhelming majority, there being only four dissentients, namely, Mrs.Besant, Lady Emily Lutyens, Jamnadas Dwarakadas, and Ratansi Dharamsey Morarji. The other two parts—C and D—were carried unanimously.

Gandhi then moved for the appointment of a Committee, consisting of a number of representative leaders named by him, to consider the best way of reuniting all political parties in the Indian National Congress, to prepare a scheme of *Swaraj* including the solution of Hindu-Moslem and like questions in their political aspects, and to report not later than 31 March, 1925,—the Conference to meet not later than 30th April. It was

unanimously carried.

The Committee met at Delhi on January 23, 1925. Gandhi, who presided, explained at the outset that the objects of the Conference were to explore the avenues of communal and political unity and to formulate a scheme of *Swaraj*. He suggested the appointment of a sub-committee to formulate the lines of agreement. This was objected to by a large section but was agreed to after a long discussion. A fully representative Sub-Committee, consisting of forty members, was appointed :

(a) to make such recommendations as would enable all parties to join the Congress ;

(b) to frame a scheme for the representation of all communities, races, and sub-divisions on the legislative and other elective bodies under *Swaraj*, and recommend the best method of securing the just and proper representation of the communities in the services with due regard to efficiency ; and

(c) to frame a scheme of *Swaraj* that will meet the present needs of the country.

This Sub-Committee divided itself into two groups, one to deal with the Hindu-Muslim union and the other to outline a scheme of *Swaraj*.

The group dealing with the scheme of *Swaraj*, presided over by Mrs. Besant, took the Draft Bill prepared by the National Convention in December, 1924 (The Commonwealth of India Bill),[22] as its basis and submitted a report on 23 February, laying down certain general principles. The other group held a few meetings but could not arrive at any agreement on the main question of the revision of the 'Lucknow Pact' [23] and the method of representation on legislative and other bodies. It was therefore adjourned *sine die*. The consideration of the *Swaraj* scheme was therefore dropped, for no such scheme could be considered without a basis of communal agreement.

The efforts of the All-Parties Conference having failed, Mrs. Besant felt herself free to push the Commonwealth of India Bill sponsored by her. She incorporated in the Bill certain features suggested in the Report of the *Swaraj* Group of the Sub-Committee, and the Bill reached its final form during the three days' sitting of the National Convention at Kanpur on April 11-13, 1925. In May, 1925, it was sent to Major D. Graham Pole, the Hony. Secretary of the British Committee on Indian Affairs in England. He laid it before the leading members of the Labour Party and it was backed by them, read a first time in the House of Commons, and ordered to be printed. It then went before the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party that examines every Bill before it is taken up by the Labour Government or Opposition, as the case may be. It was closely examined, clause by clause, and finally passed unanimously as embodying the resolutions passed by the Labour Party from time to time respecting India. It thus passed into the hands of the future Labour Government, and was put on the list of Bills balloted for as an official measure.[24] A brief memorandum explaining the imperative need of passing the Commonwealth of India Bill, signed by over forty Indian leaders of various political parties, was issued on 29 June, 1925. It contains a scathing condemnation of the British rule and the attitude of the British Government by the most moderate among eminent Indian leaders.

After making an extensive tour and propaganda work throughout India, Mrs. Besant proceeded to England on 3rd July to influence the members of Parliament, some of whom had already supported her Bill.

On Mrs. Besant's return from England two Commonwealth of India Bill Conferences were held, one in Karachi on February 14, and another at Bombay on May 7, 1926. Both the Conferences supported the Bill and Mrs. Besant

proceeded, shortly after, to America, to place India's case before its public and thereby counteract the anti-Indian propaganda of Lord Sydenham and his group.

## IV. HINDU-MUSLIM RELATION.

The Hindu-Muslim unity brought about by Gandhi in 1920-21 was artificial in character and did not produce any real change of heart. It was based on the common hostility and hatred entertained, for quite different reasons, by the Indian Nationalists and the Khilafatists towards the British, and was sustained by the militant programme of Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience. The suspension of the Civil Disobedience and Non-co-operation programme chilled the enthusiasm of the Khilafatists, and as Gandhi was shortly after removed to prison there was no one to keep up the show. Then the Khilafatist movement itself was blown out of existence by the action of Kemal Pasha, who had liberated Turkey but showed no concern for the holy places of Islam, and finally abolished the Caliphate. Thus the ground was cut from under the feet of the Khilafatists and the movement died a natural death. The need for a common front against the British having thus disappeared, the Muslim politics again resumed its communal character. The revival of the old Muslim outlook was signalized by the renewed activity of the Muslim League in 1924 and a series of communal riots sfter 1923.

### 1. The All-India Muslim League

The activities of the League had been suspended for four years, and the 15th adjourned meeting was held at Lahore on 24 May, 1924. Mr. Jinnah, who presided, in reviewing the political activity of the preceding four years in India, pointed out that though the Non-co-operation movement was a failure, and much harm was done, a great deal of good had also come out of it. "There is", he said, "an open movement for the achieve-

ment of *Swaraj* for India. There is a fearless and presistent demand that steps must be taken for the immediate establishment of Dominion Responsible Government in India. The ordinary man in the street has found his political consciousness and realised that self-respect and honour of the country demand that the government of the country should not be in the hands of any one else except the people of the country".

As the speedy atttainment of *Swaraj* was one of the declared objects of the League. it proceeded to lay down some basic and fundamental principles in any constitution for India acceptable to the Muslims. The main points stressed were the following :

1. There shall be a Federal Constitution for India with full autonomy for the Provinces, the functions of the Central Government being confined to matters of general and common concern.

2. The mode of representation in the Legislatures and all other elected bodies shall guarantee adequate and effective representation to minorities in every Province, subject, however, to the essential proviso that no majority shall be reduced to a minority or even to an equality. The representation shall continue to be by means of separate electorates as at present.

3. No Bill or resolution shall be passed in any elected body if it is opposed by three-fourths of the members of any community which feels itself affected by it.

4. The Reforms of 1919 are inadequate and unsatisfactory, and immediate steps should be taken to establish full Responsible Government.

The League deprecated communal dissensions and in order to establish inter-communal amity, recommended the establishment of conciliatory boards with a central board in each Province. The Chairman of the Reception

Committee gave an economic interpretation of the communal discord by saying that as the "majority of the Muslims is poor and the majority of the Hindus is in better circumstances, the poor Muslim is ready to rob the rich Hindus at the slightest provocation".

Almost as soon as the Non-co-operation movement died down there was a recurrence of the old feuds between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslim support to that movement was dictated by the policy of deriving advantages by co-operating with the Hindus against the British. That purpose having no longer any incentive the Muslims followed the traditional policy of seeking to derive advantages by supporting the British against the Hindus. It is very significant that when, in 1923, there was a general feeling among the Muslims against further co-operation with the Hindus, Muhammad Ali, in his Presidential Address at the annual session of the Congress at Cocanada in December, 1923, tried to combat it, not by appealing to the national feeling of the Muslims and their patriotism to India, but by pointing out the comparative advantages of co-operation with the Hindus and the British Government for attaining Pan-Islamic objectives. He appealed to the "Musalmans who are being asked today to discard the policy of non-co-operation with England to confront facts before they reverse a decision to which their sad experiences of co-operation with England had driven them." After explaining why the Muslims' loyalty to the British Government is incompatible with their loyalty to Islam, he continued : "And if we may not co-operate with Great Britain, is it expedient, to put it on the lowest plane, to cease to co-operate with our non-Muslim brethren? What is it that has happened since that staunch Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi, went to gaol for advocating the cause of Islam that we must cease to

co-operate with his co-religionists ?"[25]

But in spite of the earnest appeal of Muhammad Ali there was no possibility of reviving the communal co-operation of 1920-1 which was but a passing phase in Indian politics The revival of the old communal feelings resulted in discords over petty issues such as music before mosque, cutting down the branches of pipal tree, held sacred by the Hindus, which obstructed the very long pole carried in the Muslim Tajiya procession, killing of cows in public places during Id ceremony, and things of this sort. Referring to this lamentable state of things Muhammad Ali said in his Presidential Address in December, 1923 : "I know that Hindu-Muslim relations today are not precisely those that they were two years ago. But is it possible for any honest and truly patriotic Indian to say that either community is wholly blameless, and that the guilt is entirely one community's ?..... Most regrettable events have unfortunately occurred in Malabar, at Multan, at Agra, at Shaharanpur and elsewhere, and I am prepared to support the creation of a National Tribunal to judge the respective guilt of the two communities." [26] This was an eminently wise suggestion, but though it was mooted at a conference held at Delhi, the idea was not carried into effect. Early in 1923 there were serious communal clashes in Multan and Amritsar. Later in the year the Muslims started a definite communal movement called *Tanzeem* and *Tabligh* in order to organize the Muslims as a virile community. As a counterpart to this the *Sangathan* movement sprang up among the Hindus for promoting physical culture and removing social abuses Swami Shraddhananda vigorously carried on the *Suddhi* (purification) movement, initiated by Dayananda Swami more than half a century before, with a view to bringing back within the Hindu fold those who had renounced Hindu faith and were converted into Islam. In particula

he tried to reconvert the Malkana Rajputs who were originally Hindu, but had embraced Islam, and were now willing to come back to their ancestral faith. The *Sangathan* and *Suddhi* movements were denounced by the Muslims and caused a serious rift between the two communities.

The Muslims even suspected that the object of the removal of untouchability, emphasized by the Hindus under the guidance of Gandhi, was not the removal of a great social evil by absorption of the suppressed classes into Hindu society, but merely to use them as auxiliaries on the Hindu side in future affrays between the Hindus and Muslims. The promotion of physical culture among the Hindus was also suspected on the same ground. Ae regards the *Suddhi* movement there were allegations of coercion, intimidation and undue pressure by *Zamindars* and money-lenders and by a numerical majority of neighbours in the surrounding area. In view of such allegations by the Muslims, and the denial and counter-allegations by the Hindus the Congress decided to appoint a Committee of Inquiry, but nothing came out of it. Muhammad Ali's observation on the sudden manifestation of zeal by the Muslims and Hindus for conversion and reconversion to their faith is worth quoting : "My own belief is that both sides are working with an eye much more on the next decennial census than on heaven itself, and I frankly confess it is on such occasions that I sigh for the days when our forefathers settled things by cutting heads rather then counting them."[27]

The Hindus naturally resented the attitude of the Muslims toward the *Suddhi* movement and felt themselves perfectly justified in converting or reconverting others to their own faith,—a right which the Muslims had fully exercised all along without any restraint, and which alone accounted for their number in India. They also could not find any justification for the Muslim interpretation of

the *Sangathan* movement. But there is no doubt that the whole Muslim community was highly excited.

In the Jamait-ul-Ulema Conference held at Cocanada on December 29, 1923, the President referred to the sponsors of the *Suddhi* movement as "the worst enemies of India," and expressed the opinion that "the *Sangathan* movement would prove detrimental to the cause of Indian advance." The Conference also "condemned those activities which are likely to weaken the basis of (Hindu-Muslim) unity and considered their promoters as enemies of the nation."[28]

Serious communal riots vitiated the political atmosphere of India from 1923 onwards. The ostensible and immediate causes of these riots have been mentioned above, but they were really due to the revival of mutual suspicion and distrust which have generally characterized the relation between these two communities except during rare intervals. The deep-rooted causes, political, social and religious, which kept the Hindus and Muslims as two distinct units in India although they lived together, side by side, in this country for more than seven hundred years, have been analysed in the first volume. The fundamental consideration that kept them apart in the political evolution of the twentieth century was the disparity between the two communities in point of number and educational progress. A community which formed only one-fourth of the total population was bound to occupy a subordinate position in any democratic constitution. Whatever might have been their past position and status *vis à vis* the Hindus, under modern condition there was every chance that it would be reversed under any form of Government in Free India. And for the present the educational backwardness of the Muslims deprived them of their due and legitimate share of high and responsible posts in the Government of their country. Democratic form of Government and efficiency as the sole test in making public appointments—too high as ideals to be openly

repudiated by any sensible man in the twentieth century—stood as an insurmountable wall between the Muslims, proud of their past history and achievements, and their natural ambition to play an important role in the present or future Government of the country. This feeling of inferiority complex haunted the minds of even thoughtful and patriotic Muslims in India, and made them look wistfully to the Islamic world outside India and emphasize their membership of the Islamic Brotherhood.

It is a remarkable fact that the Hindu leaders never gave any serious consideration to these two elementary and fundamental facts in their effort to build up a common nationality on the basis of Hindu-Muslim fraternity. It will be seen, as the history of the next two decades unfolds itself, that even eminent Hindu leaders like Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, whose pro-Muslim activities were strongly resented by the Hindus, never attempted to grasp the real problems but tried to evade or ignore, if not deny, them altogether,—the first under cover of high-sounding moral, spiritual, and ethical philosophy, too abstruse to be understood by anyone but the very elect, and the second under fervid emotional appeals to abstract national ideas and sentiments. This is all the more surprising when one finds that even nationalist Muslims like Muhammad Ali, and Muslim idealist like Iqbal, gave very clear expression to Muslim feelings and ideals, their doubts, suspicion and root causes of discontent and difficulties, in their public speeches and writings. Even in his Presidential Address to the Congress of 1924, after serious communal riots had continued for two years, Gandhi said : "I share Maulāna Shaukat Ali's robust optimism that the present tension is a mere temporary distemper." Nehru's view, up to the very last, was even more short-sighted, as will be related later. We may now briefly refer to some of the riots between the Hindus and Muslims in 1923-4.

One of the worst communal riots broke out in Calcutta in May, 1923. It arose out of an Arya-Samajist procession playing music while passing before a mosque. The Arya-Samajists contended that they were merely following a regular practice which was never objected to before, while the Muslims asserted that the music disturbed their religious prayer. So, fighting commenced and continued for several days in course of which there were many casualties on both sides. There were a series of riots on July 15, 1924, on the occasion of the Bakrid. The most serious one took place at Delhi, in spite of the fact that Muhammad Ali, Ajmal Khan and other eminent Muslim leaders had, only a week before, earnestly appealed to the Muslims to keep peace on the Bakrid day.

Generally communal riots were confined to the British territory, and the Indian States were free from them. A serious riot in 1924 in Gulburga, in the Nizam's territory, formed an exception. The Muhammadan mobs attacked all the Hindu temples in the city, numbering about fifteen, and broke the idols. They also raided the Sharan Vishveshwar Temple and attempted to set fire to the Temple car. The Police were eventually obliged to fire, with the result that three Muhammadans, including the Police Superintendent Mr. Azizullah, were killed and about a dozen persons injured. Next morning the streets were again in the hands of Muhammadan mobs and considerable damage was done to Hindu houses and shops. On the arrival of Police reinforcements, order was restored. On the 14th August the Muslim mob fury was at its height and almost all the temples within the range of the mob, some fifty in number, were desecrated, their *sanctum sanctorum* entered into, their idols broken, and their buildings damaged.[29]

The most serious outbreak occurred at Kohat in N. W. F. P., a predominantly Muslim area. On the morning of 9 September, 1924. the Muslims looted and

burnt all the shops of the Hindus. On the night of 10 September the Muslims made a number of breaches in the mud walls of the city, and committed wholesale plunder and incendiarism, the alleged provocation being firing from some Hindu houses in self-defence. Before noon there were widespread fires in Hindu quarters. The Deputy Commissioner and Brigade Commander were unable to prevent the raid, and apprehending that there was a grave danger of wholesale slaughter of the Hindus, removed them to the Cantonment. Later on the Hindus removed to Rawalpindi. Gandhi, who made a joint inquiry into the incident with Shaukat Ali, observed : On 10 September, "the Muslim fury knew no bounds. Destruction of life and property, in which the Constabulary freely partook, which was witnessed by the officials and which they could have prevented, was general. Had not the Hindus been withdrawn from their places and taken to the Cantonment, not many would have lived.......Even some Khilafat volunteers, whose duty it was to protect the Hindus, and regard them as their own kith and kin, neglected their duty, and not only joined in the loot but also took part in the previous incitement."

The Kohat tragedy formed a subject of discussion in the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. The manner in which it was treated by these three bodies throws interesting light on the way in which the communal question was looked at by different sections of Indians. Motilal Nehru, who moved the resolution on the subject in the Congress, began by saying that "in Kohat a tragedy has taken place the like of which has not been known in India for many years", but scrupulously avoided casting any blame on any party, merely observing that "this is not the time for us to apportion the blame upon the parties concerned", though more than three months

had passed since the incident. The Congress resolution deplored the incident, urged the Musalmans of Kohat to assure their Hindu brethren of full protection of their lives and property and invite them to return, advised the refugees not to return except upon any such invitation, and asked everybody to suspend judgement till a proper inquiry was made.

The Muslim League repeated all these but added the following : "The All-India Muslim League feels to be its duty to place on record that the sufferings of Kohat Hindus are not unprovoked, but that on the contrary the facts brought to light make it clear that grosss provocation was offered to the religious sentiments of the Mussulmans and the Hindus were the first to resort to violence...."

The Hindu Mahasabha "expressed grief at the loss sustained by Hindus and Muslims in life and property, the burning of about 473 houses and shops, the desecration or destruction of many temples or Gurudwaras which compelled the entire Hindu and Sikh population to leave Kohat and to seek shelter in Rawalpindi and other places in the Punjab." Lala Lajpat Rai, speaking on the motion, asked "whether, even admitting that the Hindus were at faulr, their fault was such that it deserved the punishment inflicted on them."

All the three resolutions blamed the Government for the tragedy and urged the necessity of an independent public inquiry.

A joint inquiry was made by Gandhi and Shaukat Ali, and as they differed on essential points, both issued individual statements. There was not much difference about the atrocities committed by the Muslims. Shaukat Ali exonerated them on the ground that the burning and firing on the 9th were quite accidental and the Hindus gave the first provocation on the 10th. Gandhi

did not endorse this view and observed : "During these days temples including a Gurudwara were damaged and idol's broken. There were numerous forced conversions, or conversions so-called, i.e. conversions pretended for safety. Two Hindus at least were brutally murdered because they ( the one certainly and the other inferentially ) would not accept Islam. The so-called conversions are thus described by a Musalman witness. 'The Hindus came and asked to have their *Sikhas* cut and sacred threads destroyed, or the Musalmans whom they approached for protection said they could be protected only by declaring themselves Musalmans and removing the signs of Hinduism'. I fear the truth is bitterer than is put here if I am to credit the Hindu version".

Shaukat Ali admitted the murder of two Hindus for refusing to embrace Islam and the pretended conversions which, he added, were really no conversion at all. But he was not satisfied that there were any forced conversions to Islam.[30]

There was a riot at Lakhnau on 13 and 14 September, and the military had to be called in. Serious efforts were made by eminent leaders of both communities to eliminate the causes of discord by drawing up an agreed covenant guiding the relation between the Hindus and Musalmans. A Committee was appointed in the Delhi session of the Congress ( 1918 ) to draw up an Indian National Pact. A draft of the Pact, prepared by Dr. Ansari and Lala Lajpat Rai, was placed before the Subjects Committee of the Cocanada Congress in 1923. In the meantime the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, under the inspiration of C. R. Das, approved of a Hindu-Muslim Pact in respect of Bengal. Its main provisions were as follows :

1. Representation in the Legislative Council on the population basis with separate electorates.

2. Representation to local bodies to be in the proportion of 60 to 40 in every district—60 to the community which is in the majority and 40 to the minority.

3. Fifty-five per cent. of the Government posts should go to the Muslims.

4. No music should be allowed before the mosque.

5. There should be no interference with cow-killing for religious sacrifices, but the cow should be killed in such a manner as not to wound the religious feeling of the Hindus.[31]

The Subjects Committee being in favour of further consideration of the matter, Motilal Nehru moved a resolution in the open session of the Congress to refer back the draft of the Indian National Pact as well as the Bengal Pact to the Committee appointed in the Delhi session, with the substitution of Amar Singh in place of Mehtab Singh, who was in jail. The Bengal Pact was strongly opposed and after a heated debate, lasting for four hours, an amendment for the deletion of Bengal Pact from the resolution was carried by a substantial majority, 678 voting for and 458 against it. It was evident from the discussion that a written pact of compromise was not favourably looked upon by many. Although, therefore, the National Pact was referred back to the Committee, no further action was taken in the matter.

Gandhi's heart was naturally filled with sadness and sorrow when he found that the citadel of Hindu-Muslim unity which he had built and regarded as based on strong and stable foundation, tumbled down like a house of cards. He completely broke down at the news of the tragedies of Gulburga and Kohat. After passing two restless nights in pain he decided to do penance in the shape of a fast for 21 days. While staying at the house of Muhammad Ali at Delhi, he commenced the fast on 17 September, 1924. The news was received

with great concern all over the country. Muhammad Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Swami Shraddhananda issued an invitation to some 200 All-India leaders of all parties and communities to attend a Conference at Delhi to devise ways and means to restore communal amity and thereby save the life of the Mahatma. There was a ready response to this invitation and prayers were offered in temples, mosques and even churches,—the Metropolitan of India himself conducting the prayer in Delhi.

Nearly three hundred delegates met at the Unity Conference at Delhi on 26 September. Motilal Nehru presided and a number of resolutions were passed. One of them clearly defined the rights and obligations of the two communities in respect of those items like cow-slaughter, music before mosque, *arati* etc., which had hitherto been the bone of contention and the immediate causes of the communal riots, as well as the more general questions like conversion or reconversion which had created bad blood between the two communities. Another resolution established a Central National Panchayat of not more than fifteen persons, with power to organise and appoint local *panchayats* to inquire into and settle all disputes and differences, including recent occurrences, where necessary and desirable. In spite of the request of the Conference to break his fast Gandhi continued it for full 21 days, till 8 October.[32]

How far Gandhi's fast had any salutary effect on the communal relations may be judged by the fact that four days after Gandhi began his fast there was a serious communal riot at Shahjahanpur in which the military had to intervene and 9 were killed and about 100 injured. On October 8, when Gandhi broke his fast, there were serious communal riots at Allahabad, Kanchrapara near Calcutta, and at Sagar and Jubbulpore in C.P.

Great efforts were made by Hindu-Muslim leaders

of Upper India to restore communal amity, and a series of informal Conferences were held at Lahore under the guidance of Gandhi early in December, 1924. The discussion mainly centred round the representation of the two communities in the various legislatures. The Hindu leaders represented that the recent riots, most particularly the events at Kohat, had produced an atmosphere of coercion and intimidation, and until that atmosphere was changed, there could not be any proper settlement of this question on its merit. The Muslim leaders, on the other hand, said that the disputes over this question alone were responsible for the riots and therefore its settlement was necessary to bring about peace. This was a significant admission on the part of the Muslim leaders, and there is hardly any doubt that they spoke the truth. But, as noted above, the leaders were not prepared to face facts, and so nothing followed from these Conferences.

The Hindu-Muslim relations continued to grow worse in 1925 and 1926. No less than sixteen communal riots occurred in 1925, the most serious being those at Delhi, Aligarh, Arvi ( C. P. ) and Sholapur. One of the worst communal riots broke out in Calcutta on 2 April, 1926, over the question of music before mosque. The main features of the riot which continued for several days were (1) burning of houses and looting of shops ; (2) stray assaults on passers-by and stabbing them ; and (3) desecration of both mosques and temples. The riot continued in full fury on April 3, 4 and 5, but isolated attacks and threatening incidents continued till the 11th. According to official report, 44 persons died and 584 were injured as a result of the riots. There was a recrudescence of the riot on 22 April, the casualties being 66 killed and 391 injured. There was a third riot in Calcutta lasting from to 25 July resulting in 26 deaths and 226 cases of

serious injuries. There were also riots in the interior of Bengal, at Rawalpindi and Allahabad ; and no less than five riots in Delhi. In Patuakhali, a sub-divisional town in Bengal, the Hindus offered *Satyagraha* to assert their time-honoured right of playing music before mosque.

The Government issued orders to stop music before mosque dûring the prayer time in Calcutta and Allahabad, and this question was debated in the Legislative Assembly, but to no effect. Motilal Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad proposed to establish Indian National Union, an organization of non-political and non-communal character, to restore communal amity, but it was a stillborn child. The Congress also asked A.I.C.C. to devise means to improve the situation. It is significant that Gandhi kept himself severely aloof from these communal questions since January, 1925. The year 1926 ended with a terrible tragedy. Swami Shraddhananda of the famous Gurukul, near Hardwar, to whom reference has been made above, was fatally stabbed on 23 December by a Muslim who entered his sick room on a false pretence.[33] Several communal riots broke out in 1927. At Kulkathi (Barisal, Bengal) a Muslim mob refused to allow passage to a Hindu procession which was permitted by the local authorities to proceed. The Police opened fire, killing 17 and wounding 12 Muslims.[34] Twenty-seven were killed in a communal riot at Lahore, and eleven at Bettiah in Champaran District, Bihar. It has been calculated that between 1922 and 1927 approximately 450 lives were lost and 5,0C0 persons were injured in communal riots.[35]

The Statutory Commission of 1928 observes :

"Every year since 1923 has witnessed communal rioting on an extensive, and, in fact, on an increasing scale which has as yet shown no sign of abating. The attached list, which excludes minor occurrences, records no less than 112 communal riots within the last five

years, of which 31 have occurred during 1927."

The Commission also notes that the riots were not confined to a restricted area, but almost every Province was more or less affected by it. Further, the storm centres had a tendency to shift rapidly from one place to another,—from the larger to smaller towns and then to countryside.[36]

## CHAPTER V

# BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS INDIA

## I. BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The general policy of the British Government towards India, after passing the Government of India Act of 1919, was a stiong determination to stick to the letter of the Act and not to make any further advance towards Responsible Government in India, until at least the statutory period of ten years was over. The resurgence of national spirit manifested through the Non-co-operation movement left them unmoved. The acts of violence which followed the movement were looked at by them from only a single point of view, viz. maintenance of law and order. They either would not or could not discern in the movement the germs of a popular revolt or national uprising which required a different treatment. So they resolved to crush it by naked force and practically gave a *carte blanche* to the Government of India. They shut their eyes to the veritable reign of terror which the Government of India let loose for the sake of maintaining law and order, trampling under foot the best liberal traditions of Britain. In the name of law and order they ignored all the laws and principles which centuries of effort in Britain had evolved for safeguarding the rights and liberties of the people. They ruled by lawless laws, and their iron hand had not even a velvet glove.

Signs were not wanting to indicate that the British Government had no real desire to introduce Responsible Government in India within any measurable distance of

time. Lloyd George's speech, followed by Lee Commission's Report, mentioned above,[1] cannot possibly leave any doubt that the policy of the British Government was to strengthen the I. C. S. .—the steel frame on which the whole structure of the Government of India rested. Yet it is obvious to anyone that such a frame was incompatible with any structure of Responsible Government in India in the true sense of the term.

The old faith of the Indians in the sense of justice and democratic traditions of the British therefore suffered a rude shock. But faith dies hard, and there was still in the minds of many Indians a lingering hope that the Labour Party, if it ever came to power, would do justice to India. Such a hope was not without some foundation. Not only had important Labour leaders like Ramsay Macdonald and Col. Wedgwood expressed sympathetic views about the political aspirations of India, but the British Labour Party repeatedly declared from public platforms their support of the Indian demand for Home Rule. Ramsay Macdonald had sent a message to the Amritsar Congress in 1919, that when Labour comes into office it will not be bound by the objectionable clauses of the Reforms Act. Mr. Adamson, the Chairman of the Labour Party, criticized the Act of 1919 on the ground that "it does not go far enough, and that we are failing to take the people of India themselves to assist in the successful accomplishment of the great tasks we have in hand". In 1920 the Annual Conference of the Labour Party passed the following resolution : "This Conference demands the full and frank application of the principle of self-determination in the organisation of the Government of India in such a way as to satisfy all the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people." The National Executive of the Labour Party issued in November, 1922, a manifesto which said : "Labour advocates the recognition of the real inde-

pendence of Egypt and self-government of India." Even so late as 1923 Ramsay Macdonald attended the meeting at the Queen's Hall held on 17 June, to support the Indian demand of equality of status with the Dominions and delivered a long speech, in course of which he referred to the Rowlatt Act as "that stupid piece of political blundering" which "has been the cause of all the troubles". He denounced that section of the British people who had gone back on the war-time promise of self-government for India. He also declared that "most of us who have liberal minds" must accept Dominion Status for India as the "essential condition of imperial unity".[2]

Naturally high hopes were raised in India when the Labour Party came into office in 1924, with Ramsay Macdonald as the Premier. But thsese hopes were soon dashed to the ground. The Prime Minister, on assuming office, declared in unequivocal language that the Indian problems would be regarded not as party question, but as national questions. The meaning of this became quite clear from the reaction of the Labour Government to the resolution passed by the Indian Legislative Assembly in February, 1924, urging the appointment of a Round Table Conference at an early date to revise the Government of Iadia Act of 1919.[3] In a long speech on 26 February, 1924, Lord Olivier, the Secretary of State for India, outlined the views and policy of the Labour Party towards India and rejected the Indian demand on grounds which might have easily been taken out of a leaf of the Conservative book. Not even a distant echo was heard of the liberal sentiments expressed by the Labour Party before 1924. The die-hard Conservatives now felt that the "trusteeship" of India was quite safe in the hands of the Labour Ministry The Indians were reminded of two lines in a poem of Tennyson and felt that "Ministry

may come and Ministry may go, but the British policy on India goes for ever".

But the Labour Party's power of doing good or evil was shortlived. They were turned out of office as a result of the General Election at the end of 1924. It was with great glee, and not with a reasonable feeling of pride, that Baldwin pointed out to the British electorate in the election campaign against the Labour Party in October, 1924, that "the Labour Party, before it came into office, had never failed to proclaim its sympathy with the extremists of India, who in their turn were lost in amazement that the Labour Party has not yet, in familiar parlance, "delivered the goods".

The parting kick of the Labour Government was the sanction of the Bengal Ordinance of 25 October, 1924. Lord Olivier was under no illusion as to the nature of the Ordinance. Three months after the Labour Government was replaced by the Conservatives, he himself raised the question in the House of Commons and indicated that the Ordinance practically took away any protection for liberty established by British law. He even quoted the following passage from observations of Blackstone to support his view :

"To bereave a man of life, or by violence to confiscate his estate, without accusation or trial, would be so gross and notorious an act of despotism as must at once convey the alarm of tyranny throughout the whole kingdom. But confinement of the person"—that is precisely what this Ordinance aims at—"by secretly hurrying him to gaol, where his sufferings are known or forgotten, is a less striking, and therefore a more dangerous engine of arbitrary government, and yet sometimes, when the State is in real danger, even this may be a necessary measure. But the happiness of our Constitution is that it is not left to the executive power to determine when the

danger of the State is so great as to render this measure expedient. For it is the Parliament only or a legislative power, that, whenever sees proper, can authorise the Crown, by suspending the Habeas Corpus Act for a short and limited time, to imprison suspected persons without giving any reason for so doing".[4]

The coming of the Conservatives to power therefore meant no change of policy. Lord Birkenhead became Secretary of State for India, and the somewhat mysterious episode of his negotiations with C.R. Das has been noted above[5]. In a speech on 7 July, 1925, he reiterated the old British policy towards India. He reminded the British people that "of the 440 millions of British citizens, who constitute the British Empire, 320 millions are Indian. The loss of India would mean a shrinkage in the Empire from 13,250,000 to less than 11,500,000 square miles."

Regarding the Indian aspirations for Responsible Government he observed : "The Act of 1919 was admittedly an experiment. We shall not be diverted from its high obligations by tactics of restless impatience. The door to acceleration is not open to menace. Still less will it be stormed by violence....I should, however, be failing in my duty if I did not make plain my clear and definite impression that the tactics hitherto pursued by the most highly organized party in India could not have been more happily conceived if they had been subtly intended to forward the cause of reaction....To talk of India as an entity is as absurd as to talk of Europe as an entity, yet the nationalist spirit which has created most of our difficulties in the last few years is based upon the aspirations and claims of a Nationalist India. There never has been such a nation. Whether there ever will be such a nation, the future alone can show...... If we withdraw from India tomorrow, the immediate

consequences would be a struggle, *a l' outrance*, between the Moslems and the Hindu population."

Referring to the demand for an earlier revision, Birkenhead said: "There will be, there can be, no reconsideration, until we see everywhere among the responsible leaders of Indian thought, evidence of a sincere and genuine desire to co-operate with us, in making the best of the existing constitution.

Lord Birkenhead then defended the policy of the Government in ignoring the decisions of the Legislatures, which apparently was in conflict with the British traditions of liberal and democratic principles. He reminded the intractable members of the Indian Legislatures who refused to support the Government "that, while we have obligations in respect of the voters who number only some eight and a half millions, we have also obligations in respect of the two hundred and fifty millions in British India of whom we are the responsible guardian, and, in a less degree, in respect of the seventy millions in the Indian States."

In conclusion Birkenhead assured his peers that "There is no Lost Dominion" and "There will be no Lost Dominion."[6]

Such was the British Policy towards India in 1925 and such it continued to be for the next fifteen years. There was no vital difference between the Conservative and the Labour Party in this respect. Lord Olivier wholeheartedly endorsed the views of Birkenhead and felt sure that Birkenhead's speech "would be a message of encouragement and sympathy to India for which the community would be grateful to him." It is hardly necessary to add that Birkenhead's speech, and specially the support to it by Labour spokesmen, were strongly resented in India.

It is, however, only fair to add that no exception can be taken to the policy so clearly and accurately

expounded by Birkenhead if we look at it from the point of view of the British alone. For we must remember that the retention of absolute control over India was not merely an imperial sentiment ; it was a question of life and death to the British people. Eminent British statesmen like Churchill dinned into the ears of the British public that every man in Britain out of five was maintained by India. It was evident, specially after the first World War, that England could not maintain her position of supremacy in world politics, unless she could control the resources of India to her benefit. So there was a deadly struggle in British mind between the abstract love of liberty and the instinct of self-preservation. Two most powerful forces in human nature were pitted against each other and the result was a grim tragedy.

## II. THE BRITISH PEOPLE

The general attitude of the British people towards India continued to be as before, viz, one of general indifference. The small section which interested itself on Indian questions consisted mostly of die-hard Conservatives, backed up by the retired members of the Indian Civil Service, with a sprinkling of genuine sympathisers for Indian political aspirations.

Among the last the Indians should always remember with gratitude the active sympathy shown to their political aspirations by Col. Wedgwood, Mr. Lansbury, Mr. Scurr, Mr. Pethick Lawrence, and Major Graham Pole, among others, who often protested against wrongs and injustices to India. But their number could almost be counted on one's fingers and they exercised no influence either on the Government or on the people of Britain.

Nothing more strikingly illustrates the general British attitude towards India than the sympathy and support which General Dyer received from all classes including a Judge of the Court.

The whole episode of Dyer—his brutal measures, the light punishment inflicted upon him, the condonation of his conduct by the House of Lords, and the acclamation of praise with which his inhuman conduct was greeted by Englishmen and English women, both in India and England—illustrates, as nothing else could, the racial arrogance of the English people and the little regard or consideration which they had for Indians as a whole. The verdict of Justice McCardie, in the Defamation Case instituted by Sir Michael O'Dwyer against Sir Sankaran Nair, fully approving of the conduct of Dyer, as well as his whole conduct in the case, shows that even the traditional sense of justice which characterized the British people was sacrificed at the altar of imperialism. The conduct of Mc.Cardie could be explained as an individual case of aberration of mental and moral faculty—his reference to the congratulation of Sikh priests as an argument for the defence of Dyer's conduct can hardly be regarded as anything else—but the approval of his findings by the rank and file of the Conservatives clearly demonstrates the moral canker of the British people at large.

The nineteenth century imperialism was still going strong among the English people. After winning the Defamation Case against Sir Sankaran Nair, tried by Judge McCardie, referred to above, and a British jury, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, of the Panjab notoriety, wrote an article under the caption "India at stake" and issued it to the Press. It was full of misstatements and misrepresentations of Indians, deliberately propagated to alienate the British sympathy, whatever there was, from the national aspirations of the Indians. It was circulated and applauded all over England, and its reaction upon British opinion may be judged from the comment of the *Sunday Express*: "In the last resort we hold India by the sword, and as guardians of civilization we dare not let it slip from our grasp."

Mrs. Besant, who was then in England, issued a rejoinder to O'Dwyer's statement. It was couched in very mild language, but pointed out the inaccuracies in O'Dwyer's statement. No British paper printed it except Mr. Brailsford's paper, *The Standard.*[7] This is an eloquent testimony to the lack of fairness and sense of justice displayed by the British people in any matter concerning India.

But some Britishers were more honest and straightforward, and less hypocritical than the *Sunday Express.* Thus Joynson-Hicks said : "We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we should continue to hold it—I am not such a hypocrite as to say we hold India for the Indians. We went with a yardstick in one hand and sword in the other, and with the latter we shall continue to hold them helpless while we force the former down their throats." [8]

## III. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

The policy of the Government of India is sufficiently indicated by the repressive laws and atttitude towards the Indian demands for political reforms, to which reference has been made above in the preceding Chapters. The Government was almost entirely dominated by the bureaucracy, and the personality or views of the Governor-General counted for little. The bureaucracy never felt any interest in the real welfare of the country, and regarded the sole duty of the Government to be to maintain law and order or rather the supremacy of the British in India. Their attentions were directed mainly to two ends ; first, to nullify the effect of the Reforms Act as far as possible without tearing off the mask ; and, secondly, not only to maintain the existing power, privileges, and prerogatives, but also to increase them by various means.

Like autocracies in every age and in every part of the world, the Government of India carried on a system

of ruthless oppression in the name of law and order. It will be hardly any exaggeration to say that practically throughout the period from 1908 to 1947, with rare intervals, India was governed by what has been aptly described as a set of lawless laws.

Almost every demand in Legislatures for the repeal of repressive laws was resisted by the bureaucracy on the ground that law and order cannot otherwise be maintained. If this contention were true it can only be interpreted as a failure and breakdown of administration.

In taking recourse to naked force as the only means of ruling India, the Government of India occasionally descended below the level of a standard which every Government, deserving the epithet civilized, is reasonably expected to maintain. The gradual development of the iniquitous methods of the Government of India has been summed up in a remarkably lucid manner by a man of the stamp of Sir Sankaran Nair who cannot be accused of either extremism in politics or bias against the British Government in India. If he had any bias at all it was in favour of that Government, as was evidenced by his open accusation of Gandhi and his methods. The adverse judgement of such a man against the Government of India cannot be lightly set aside, and no excuse is therefore needed to reproduce a lengthy extract from one of his articles, published in an English paper, after the Bengal Ordinance was promulgated on 25 October, 1924.

"When the Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon and the steps taken by Sir Bamfylde Fuller to suppress the protest against it threw Bengal into a ferment, the "agitators" of Bengal were prosecuted before the ordinary civil courts of the country. In the majority of cases the prosecution failed, because in the opinion of the High Court the case was supported by false witnesses ; it was proved that the police were guilty of suppressing true evidence ;

it was proved that they manufactured evidence in various ways—for example, by placing bullets in incriminating places, and by introducing bombs into the dwelling places of the accused. The High Court found also that certain District Magistrates lent their countenance to Police pressure on witness, and that Sessions Judges in many cases convicted against the evidence. All this appears in the published reports of the cases which are available to any one who desires details.

"The Indian Government availed themselves of the war to pass the Defence of India Act, which it is now sought to revive. Under this Act.........a man might be arrested and kept indefinitely in jail (or interned in a particular locality) without being brought to trial. For those who were to be tried new courts were or could be constituted and new laws of evidence or procedure were prescribed........ The Rowlatt Act, a repetition of the Defence of India Act, was responsible for an agitation unexampled in India. The Punjab...rose in fury: Amritsar, Lahore, Jallianwalla massacres, indiscriminate arrests, trials and convictions which recall the days of Jeffreys in England followed...India lost faith in England...Then the Labour Party came into power. In India there were great hopes... Events have belied these expectations...But no one expected they would go farther and revive a measure which has been responsible for a terrible conflagration and has destroyed England's moral supremacy and Englishmen's influence for good. This Act, as I have pointed out, would destroy freedom of speech, of the Press, and of the person. Trials would become a farce. The Labour Party had a great opportunity. They have not risen to the occasion."[9]

Among the Provincial Governors, Lord Lytton attained an unenviable notoriety by his ill-judged pronouncements. Addressing a Police parade at Dacca, he said: "The thing that has distressed me more than anything else since I

came to India is to find that mere hatred of authority can drive Indian men to induce Indian women to invent offences against their own honour merely to bring discredit upon Indian policemen." [10] Such an insinuation against the womanhood of India which, from its very nature, is incapable of being satisfactorily proved, naturally provoked an outburst of indignation all over India, and merely proves the depth of degradation to which an English gentleman, not to speak of a British Peer, could descend for maintaining the prestige of the police which was the only bulwark of his Government. No wonder that the Bengal Provincial Conference passed a resolution that he was unfit to hold the office of Governor.[11] But the very next year he was appointed acting Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

The inhuman treatment of the detenus, i. e. persons kept in detention without any trial, is one of the most tragic chapters of British rule in India and recalls the memory of barbarous methods pursued by tyrannical rulers in Medieval Europe. Numerous tragic episodes concerning the lot of these detenus were regularly brought to the notice of the Government through petitions and public press, but without any result.[12]

Reference may be made in this connection to a Memorial sent to the Secretary of State for India on July 25, 1924, by some State Prisoners detained in Bassein Jail. It unfolds a gruesome picture of the diabolical method pursued by the Government of India in selecting victims for the lawless laws, the real purpose lying behind wholesale arrests and detention without trial, the farcical procedure of framing charges against them, the so-called judicial scrutiny of the evidence by judges *in camera*, the inhuman treatment of the detenus —all of whom were educated persons belonging to respectable classes of society,—and above all the network of *agents provacateurs*, maintained by the rapidly growing Secret Service with the selfish object of provoking

commitment of crimes in order to justify the organization, the use of the manufactured revolutionary crimes to serve the political end of putting down legitimate activities for the upliftment of the masses and constitutional agitation for gaining self-government. As a pen-picture of the barbarous medievel methods pursued by the British Government in India in the twentieth century, drawn by actual victims from their own knowledge and experience, this document is of great historical importance.[13] It may be argued that the account proceeds from an interested party, but exactly the same charge lies against the Government version. It is necessary to read both in order to form an impartial opinion on the question. But the Memorial does not stand alone.[14] It has been generally corroborated by the writings and oral accounts of many high-souled patriotic Indians who spent the best years of their lives in detention camps or British jails. The author of this book has taken great pains to ascertain the truth by interrogating a large number of respectable persons, still living, who had personal experience of such life, and have at the present moment no motive or inducement to misrepresent the British Government or exaggerate their iniquities. Every available evidence indicates that in the name, and under the disguise, of suppressing revolutionary crimes, the British Government adopted the most unscrupulous methods to stifle national urge for freedom and inflicted upon the helpless detenus behind the iron curtain varieties of physical torture, a knowledge of whose diabolical nature would shock the civilized world.[14a]

The policy of 'Divide and Rule' guided the British officials as before. Reference has been made above to the observations of Nevinson about the distinct partiality shown by the British officials to the Muslims as against the Hindus.[15] Far more damaging was the statement of Lord

Olivier. Shortly after he ceased to be the Secretary of State for India, he made the following comments, in a letter to *The Times*, on the communal riots in India : "But there are other causes of the increasing faction fighting. No one with close acquaintance of Indian affairs will be prepared to deny that on the whole there is a predominant bias in British officialism in India in favour of the Moslem community, partly on the ground of closer sympathy, but more largely as a makeweight against Hindu Nationalism."

When challenged in the House of Lords by both Birkenhead and Lord Reading, he made the following observations, among others, in explaining his position : "But what I did say—it is based upon what I have heard from a great many Englishmen who have served in India and from a great many Indians who have a very good reputation in India—was that there is an official bias in favour of the Mahomedan community...I will give you an example. When the Hindu-Muslim pact was made it was a pact which strengthened the probability of an advance towards Swaraj policy in India. A very large number of persons, officials and others in India, regard the advance towards the self-governing Swaraj policy as a movement deleterious to British interest in India, and I say confidently that when the Hindu-Muslim pact broke up, there was a distinct satisfaction on the part of those persons both in this country and in India who were opposed to the Nationalist movement, that the pact had broken up and that there should be political dissensions among those affected."[16]

## IV. THE ANGLO-INDIANS

The non-official British population in India, who, for the sake of convenience, may be referred to as 'Anglo-Indians', constituted, during the period under review, an unofficial anti-Indian wing of the British bureaucracy in India. The

same causes which alienated the British officials also operated in their case, for they also stood to suffer, in material prospects as well as in prestige and status, with each stage of real political advance in India. But being free from official restraints they could more easily give vent to their anti-Indian feelings. They were the loudest in the denunciation of any reforms or concessions granted to India and took every means in their power to thwart them. The European Associations, in many cases, proved the evil geniuses of Indian bureaucracy and Governments, and evidence is not lacking of their reactionary influence even on high officials. There is also indisputable testimony to their unholy alliance with various sections of Indian people in order to check the constitutional advance of India.

The Anglo-Indians never forgot that though they were *in* India, they were not *of* India, and their interests were adverse to those of the Indians. Hence they were opposed tooth and nail to Reforms of 1919 and offered continuous, strenuous and persistent opposition at every step of political reforms. Like all Colonials of an imperial country they were the greatest enemies of the true interest of India, for the very simple and obvious reason that as India politically advances their material prospects, power and prestige almost necessarily decline. The older generations of Anglo-Indians could afford to be generous or indifferent as they had no reasonable apprehensions of any political regeneration of India. The Anglo-Indians of the twentieth century were faced with a national reawakening of the Indians, of the portents and possibilities of which their local knowledge made them fully conscious. They had to gird their loins to fight against it for the sake of their own interests.

Nothing illustrates more strikingly the great changes that had come over the Englishmen in India than the tone of their newspapers. Even the *Statesman and Friend*

*of India* had no longer the least claim to the title though it was more moderate than the *Englishman* of Calcutta, which, as its name implied, correctly represented the views of typical Colonial Englishman. The *Statesman* ceased to be friend of India and became the accredited representative of the Anglo-Indian imperialism.

Apart from the imperial policy, one finds that the general attitude of haughtiness, arrogance and insolence, displayed by the Englishmen in India towards her people, was as characteristic a feature in the twentieth century as in the nineteenth.[17] This has been very critically reviewed by Henry W. Nevinson who paid a short visit to India during the *Swadeshi* movement. He writes : "The attitude of the vulgar among Anglo-Indians towards the people of the country would be incredible to any one who had not seen it and the vulgar are a large and increasing class."[18] As in the nineteenth century, so in the twentieth, even decent young Englishmen, fresh from home, rapidly joined the crowd of their vulgar countrymen. The process is thus described by Nevinson. "They increase by a kind of infection, and the deterioration of a new-comer who has been sent out with the usual instincts of our educated classes in favour of politeness and decency is often as unconscious as it is rapid......At first they are astonished that Anglo-Indian opinion not only permits but imposes so ill-bred a manner in intercourse with "natives", but the astonishment soon wears off, and the infection of arrogance catches them as a matter of course."[19] But an almost irresistible social pressure also facilitated the conversion. The new arrivals from England would be socially ostracized, if they did not fall in a line with the vulgar Anglo-Indians in their attitude towards the Indians. As Nevinson puts it, many of the young Englishmen and English women were driven to conform to the code of insolence established by the Anglo-Indians, for it is too much to expect that a

young man fresh from home would choose "to cut himself off altogether from the society and amusements of his own people", or "stand alone against feminine dislike and masculine views of good form", and be altogether indifferent to "personal reputation or advancement."[20] So Gresham's law operated in Anglo-Indian society and turned the good coin out of the market in favour of the bad. It is still within living memory how a young Britisher belonging to the I. C. S. married a daughter of a very distinguished Indian, well-known for advanced Anglicised mode of life, and for this offence could not rehabilitate himself into the Anglo-Indian society, not to put it more bluntly.

If the insolence of the Anglo-Indians continued as before, its exhibition also conformed to the old style. To quote again from Nevinson's book : "On almost every railway journey one sees instances of ill manners that would appear *too outrageous* for belief at home. But it is the same *throughout*. In hotels, clubs, bungalows, and official chambers, the people of the country, and especially the educated classes, are treated with an habitual contumely *more exasperating than savage persecution*."[21] There is no doubt that there were also Englishmen possessing good manners, but Nevinson very truly observes : "But one's mere delight in finding them proved their rarity."[22]

The social estrangement between the two races, which rapidly increased after Port Said was left,[23] soon made its influence felt also in political and even judicial spheres. A few cases noted below, which are merely illustrative and not exhaustive, show that as in the nineteenth century, so in the twentieth, there was one standard of justice for the Indians and another for the Englishmen.

Sir Walter Strickland, a British Baronet, wrote in 1913 : "The other day, in Lahore, an English or Scottish person of the name of Stirling murdered his Indian servant in the most cowardly and treacherous manner. He first

kicked him out of the room, and then shot him in the back. I cited this case in a letter home to illustrate British even-handed justice......with the following comment: 'This cowardly scoundrel will be as certainly acquitted, without a stain upon his honour, as the unfortunate servant would have been swung without mercy, if the crime had been the other way'. We have just had the sentence: Mr. Stirling was sentenced to one month's simple imprisonment."[24]

The three following incidents were reported in a single year—1921.

1). Khoreal Shooting Case—A European planter of Assam shot at the father of a coollie girl whom he wanted for his lust, but in the trial the European jury acquitted him.

2). A British Major at Sialkot, travelling with his wife without ticket, entered a Railway compartment occupied by some Indians and forced them to leave.

3). Lt. House at Agra forced some Indian First class passengers to leave the compartment by threatening them with a revolver. He was simply fined by the court.[25]

Nevinson found it disconcerting to discover a prevailing and uneasy suspicion in India that British justice could not safely be trusted. Referring to a few recent instances, he observed : "Killing no murder, outrage no crime, when Indians are concerned and Englishmen are culprits—that was the common conclusion, and it was not unnatural".[26] The instances cited above, which may be multiplied almost to any extent, prove that the conclusion was absolutely right, being based on unimpeachable evidence, and that it was a tradition handed down from the nineteenth century.

To complete the analogy between the two centuries, reference may be made to the rabid writings in Anglo-Indian Journals, inspired by racial hatred. Here is a

specimen from the *Asian* of Calcutta. Commenting on the unsuccessful attempt of two Bengali revolutionaries to murder Kingsford, to which reference has been made above, this Anglo-Indian weekly wrote on 9 May, 1908 :

"Mr Kingsford has a great opportunity, and we hope he is a fairly decent shot at short range. We recommend to his notice a Mauser pistol ... We hope Mr Kingsford will manage to secure a big 'bag', and we envy him his opportunity. He will be more than justified in letting daylight into every strange native approaching his house or his person, and for his own sake we trust he will learn to shoot fairly straight without taking his weapon out of his coat pocket.[27]"

On this Nevinson comments : "I have seen violent and bloodthirsty passages translated from the *Yugantar*, the *Sandhya*, the *Hitaishi* of Barisal, and other vernacular papers. Such papers are fined, suppressed, have editors imprisoned, and under the new Press Act may have their type confiscated. But in none of them have I seen more deliberate attempts to stir up race hatred and incite to violence than in Anglo-Indian papers which suffer nothing. Take, for instance, this obvious instigation to indiscriminate manslaughter by the *Asian*" ( and he quotes a long passage including the lines quoted above).[28]

Referring to the *Englishman* and the *Civil and Military Gazette*, the two leading Anglo-Indian papers, respectively of Calcutta and Lahore, Nevinson observes that "it must have been difficult for any thoughtful Indian who loved his country to read them during 1907 without cursing our race."[29]

Even Gokhale, the Prince of Moderates, remarked that the insolence of the Anglo-Indian papers like these two "towards our people goes beyond all bounds."[30]

The British attitude towards India, of which a brief account has been given above, has a great bearing on the

history of freedom movement in India. The niggardly policy of granting too little concessions, and that too not until it was too late, sustained the struggle for freedom even though many leading politicians in India were loyal and staunch supporters of the British rule. They placed great faith upon the Liberal party in England in 1906, but their disappointment gave rise to the Extremists. They again hoped a great deal from Montagu, but the Government of India Act and the Rowlatt Acts practically ruined the Moderate party which they represented. The final *coup de grace* was given by the conduct of the Labour Government in 1924. The British politicians gradually realized their folly, but then it was too late. The Earl of Halifax, speaking on the second reading of the Indian Independence Bill in 1947, made the very melancholy but apposite remark : "All too often in India has British policy suffered the frustration and condemnation of "to little and too late".

But the other aspect of the British attitude, viz. the insolence and arrogance of Englishmen in India, of which a few instances have been given above, was no less an important factor. The discrimination made by the Judiciary and the Executive between the Indians and the Englishmen, both as regards individual crimes as well as the writings in the press, made the Indians lose faith in English integrity and sense of justice, the two main qualities that sustained the British power in India. Few Englishmen realize even today that the impunity with which their countrymen could kick or kill the Indians, treating them more as chattels than human beings, and the stories of their unprovoked assault upon men and unpunished outrages upon women perhaps did far more to undermine the British authority in India than an abstract love of freedom and liberty on the part of the Indians.

# CHAPTER VI,

# THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

## A. EVENTS LEADING TO THE MOVEMENT

### I. THE SIMON COMMISSION

The communal riots in and after 1923 merely highlighted the slump in the political activity and decadence in public life which were brought about by Gandhi's action in suspending Civil Disobedience and Non-co-operation movement in 1922. Fortunately for India's struggle for freedom, the fatal inertia that had practically put an end to all its outward activities, was removed by an action of the British Government, namely the appointment of Simon Commission in 1928.

The genesis of the Commission may be briefly told. The Government of India Act, 1919, contained a provision that at the end of ten years after its passing, the working of the Reforms introduced by it should be inquired by a Commission with a wiew to determining what further action, if any, should be taken to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing. As mentioned above, several attempts were made by Indian leaders of different parties, to accelerate the pace of political progress by revision of the Reforms at an earlier date without waiting till December, 1929, which would complete the statutory period of ten years from the passing of the Act. But the Government of India and the British Government had steadily refused to concede the demand. Suddenly, on November 8, 1927, the British Prime Minister sprang a great surprise upon the Indian

public by announcing the decision of the British Cabinet immediately to constitute the Commission. The motive was apparent to everybody. The life of the British House of Commons would expire in 1929, and there was a growing probability that the new election would return the Labour Party to power. It was generally held in Britain that a Labour Government would be more sympathetic to Indian demands, and perhaps go further in conceding reforms than would be compatible with the vested interests of Britain in India. It was, therefore, considered safer to appoint the Commission forthwith and thus forestall the Labour Government. Thus, as Srinivasa Iyengar, the President of the Congress, put it, "When a Commission was wanted the British Government would not give it ; but they would impose upon the Indian people a Commission which is not wanted and when it is not wanted."

This was not, however a very serious question. But the sting was in the tail. The Prime Minister announced at the same time that the Commission would be composed of seven British members of the Parliament including Sir John Simon, the Chairman. The exclusion of Indians from a body which was to prepare the future constitution of India was so unnatural and unreasonable, that the announcement was received with profound disappointment and righteous indignation by all political leaders in India, irrespective of their party affiliations, and they unanimously decided to boycott the Commission. Never before, within living memory, did the Indian political leaders hold a common view on such an important political issue.

The Congress point of view was expressed as follows by its President S. S. Iyengar : "The reasons for the boycott are of the most cogent description. Indian people, as the Congress has rightly claimed, are entitled to determine their own Constitution either by a Round Table Conference

or by a convention Parliament. That claim has been definitely negatived by the appointment of the Commission. That is the most important reason not only from the Congress point of view but from the point of view, I am certain, of all the Indian political parties which concurred in the two resolutions of the Legislative Assembly of 18th February, 1924, and 8th September, 1925. That of course is the fundamental objection. The second reason is that we cannot be parties to an inquiry into our fitness for Swaraj or for any measure of responsible government. Our claim for Swaraj is there and it is only a question of negotiations and settlement between the British Government and the Indian people. The third reason is undoubtedly the affront to Indian self-respect involved in the deliberate exclusion of Indians from the Commission."[1] The general attitude of the Indians towards the Commission was thus eloquently put by Sapru in his Presidential Address: "I do not think a worse challenge has been thrown out ever before to Indian nationalism, and notwithstanding the profuse assurance in Mr. Baldwin's speech and the yet more profuse assurances in Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's speech, Indian nationalists of the Moderate school have been compelled to ask if the only way of recognizing the spirit of co-operation is by telling Indians that their lot is to be none other than that of petitioners, that they cannot be trusted to participate in the responsibility of making recommendations to Parliament for the future of their country, and that all that they may aspire to is to put their proposals before the Commission which may accept them or reject them, and again to repeat the same process of persuasion, argument and discussion before the Joint Committee of Parliament. Now, if this is what is meant by co-operation, if this is the new idea of equality of status on which we are to be fed, if our patriotism is a prejudice and if the patriotism of the seven Members of Parliament is to be

treated as impartial justice, then we Liberals feel justified in telling the Government here and in England, 'You may do anything you like in the assertion of your right as supreme power, but we are not going to acquiesce in this method of dealing with us. Neither our self-respect nor our sense of duty to our country can permit us to go near the Commission,"[2]

While the proposal of boycotting the Simon Commission was adopted by all political parties, the Indian National Congress suggested some practical measures to make it effective. These included (1) mass demonstrations all over India on the day the members of the Commission set foot in this country, and similar demonstrations in every city on the day it was visited by them ; (2) refusal of legislatures to elect their own Committees to co-operate with the Commission or helping their inquiry in any way, (3) rejection of the demand for grant in connection with the Commission, and (4) social boycott of the members of the Commission.

The Congress organization made the boycott a great success. On February 3, 1928, the day of the arrival of the Commission in Bombay, complete *hartal* was observed in all important towns in India, and huge demonstrations marched in processions waving black flags and carrying banners with the words, "Go back, Simon," inscribed on them. Of the numerous public meetings of protest held on that day the one held at Bombay was the most memorable. Over fifty thousand people were assembled in the Chaupatti beach, and political leaders of different parties strongly condemned in one voice the action of the British Cabinet.

On February 16, 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai moved a resolution in the Assembly to the effect that as the scheme of the Commission was unacceptable to the House it would have nothing to do with it at any stage and in any form.

The resolution, supported by an overwhelming majority of elected members, was passed amid cries of "Bande Mataram." The effect of it was, however, somewhat marred by the attitude of the Council of State which elected representatives to participate in the Joint Conference. In the various Provincial Councils, also, the Government succeeded with the help of the official votes in constituting Committees to co-operate with the Commission. The Nationalist members in each Council strongly opposed the motion for the appointment of Committees and then walked out and took no part in any further proceedings in connection with these Committees.

## II. ATTEMPTS MADE BY INDIAN LEADERS TO DRAFT THEIR OWN CONSTITUTION.

There is no cloud without a silver lining. Even the universally abused Simon Commission produced at least one good effect on Indian politics. It induced the Indian leaders seriously to think about formulating a scheme of Indian Constitution acceptable to all parties. This feeling was quickened by the open challenge of Lord Birkenhead to the Swarajist party "to produce a constitution which carries behind it a fair measure of general agreement among the great peoples of India." The question was taken up by the Indian National Congress in its Madras session in 1927. It passed a resolution authorizing the Working Committee to confer with similar committees appointed by other organizations, political, labour, commercial and communal, to draft a *Swaraj* constitution for India, and to place the same for consideration and approval before a special Convention to be convened in Delhi not later than March, 1928, consisting of the All-India Congress Committee and the leaders and representatives of the other organizations mentioned above, and elected members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures.

The idea was fully approved by the All-India Liberal Federation and the Muslim League in their annual sessions which met, respectively, at Bombay and Calcutta shortly afterwards. In compliance with the directions contained in the Madras Congress resolution quoted above, the Working Committee issued invitations to a large number of organizations.

Many of these organizations sent representatives to the Conference which held its first meeting on 12 February, 1928, at Delhi under the Chairmanship of Dr. M. A. Ansari. After crossing many hurdles, chiefly created by the difference between Hindu and Muslim points of view, the All-Parties Conference, which met at Lakhnau from 28 to 31 August, 1928, accepted the very detailed recommendations of a Committee appointed by it under the Chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru.

The essential features of the Constitution framed by the Nehru Committee may be summed up as follows :

1. The form of Government should be Responsible, that is to say, a Government in which the Executive should be responsible to a popularly elected Legislature possessing full and plenary powers.

2. The sovereign Parliament should consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives, the former to consist of 200 members elected by the Provincial Councils by the method of proportional representation, and the latter of 500 members elected on the basis of adult franchise. The powers of Parliament were to be analogous to those of the Dominions.

3. The communal representation in the Legislatures was to be regulated on the following basis :

a. There shall be joint mixed electorates throughout India for the House of Representatives and the Provincial Legislatures.

b. There shall be no reservation of seats for the

House of Representatives except for Muslims in Provinces where they are in a minority and non-Muslims in the N. W. F. Province.

In the Provinces,

c. There shall be no reservation of seats for any community in the Panjab and Bengal.

d. In other Provinces there will be reservation of seats for the minorities on the basis of population with right to contest additional seats.

But the unanimity shown at the Lakhnau Conference did not last long. When the All-Parties' Convention met in Calcutta on 22 December, 1928, the Muslims made new demands, and it was now for the first time that Muhammad Ali Jinnah emerged as the leader of the community.

Jinnah began his political career in the school of Gokhale and was an adherent of the Congress up to the Non-co-operation movement (1920-21). He was an able debater and a top rank political leader. But, as he himself put it, the mysticism of Gandhi was too great a mystery for him. He was also opposed to the orthodox and reactionary Muslim parties. So, out of sheer disgust, he left politics, went to England and made up his mind to settle in that country. A story runs that he was piqued by a casual remark of Jawaharlal Nehru to the effect that 'Jinnah has ceased to count in politics', and decided to return to India in order to show that he was still an important factor to reckon with. Whatever we might think of the story, there is no doubt that Nehru held a very poor opinion of the character and ability of Jinnah as a politician[3] and also that when Jinnah returned in October, 1928, he was a completely changed man and at once gave a new turn to Muslim politics in India. He first made himself the undisputed head of the Muslim League, of which be became the lifelong President. There were other

Muslim parties led by Aga Khan and Muhammad Shafi, and there was also the Central Khilafat Committee. But Jinnah's undoubted abilities as a Parliamentarian and an organizer soon brought him into the forefront of Indian politics as the leader of the strongest and most representative Muslim party.

When the constitution, drawn up by the Nehru Committee and unanimously accepted at the Lakhnau Conference came up for discussion at the Calcutta Convention, Jinnah, on behalf of the Muslim League, put forth the following three suggestions, among others, in the form of amendments :

1. The Muslims should have one-third representation on the Central Legislature.

2. The Panjab and Bengal Legislatures should have Muslim representation on the population basis for ten years, in the event of adult suffrage not being granted.

3. Residuary powers should be vested in the Provinces and not in the centre.

After an acrimonious debate the amendments of Jinnah were lost and he left the Convention in protest. Next day the Sikhs also withdrew their support and the Convention was adjourned *sine die*.

Jinnah now joined the more reactionary section of the Muslims led by Aga Khan and Muhammad Shafi and an All-Parties' Conference of the Muslims was held in Delhi on the first of January, 1929. It passed a long resolution supporting the separate electorate as existing at the time, and the first and the third amendment of Jinnah mentioned above. It also demanded that no bill, resolution, motion or amendment regarding inter-communal matters may be moved, discussed or passed by any Legislature, Central or Provincial, if a three-fourth majority of members of either the Hindu or the Muslim community affected thereby in that Legislature oppose the introduction, discussion or

passing of such bill, resolution, motion or amendment.

Apart from the Muslims, some sections of Sikhs, non-Brahmins and Backward and Depressed communities also did not fully approve of the Nehru Constitution, and even the Christians, while expressing general approval, were of opinion that it did not sufficiently safeguard the interest of minorities. On the other hand, it should be remembered that eminent Muslim leaders like Dr. Ansari, Sir Ali Imam, the Maharaja of Mahmudabad and many others approved of the Nehru Constitution and the scheme for communal representation adopted in it. The same thing may be said of the other minority communities and organizations. Besides, the All-India Liberal Federation, an all-India political body next in importance only to the Indian National Congress, gave its blessings to the Nehru Constitution.

It is often ignored, while emphasizing these differences, that there was complete unanimity among all in respect of the chief object of the constitution, viz. the establishment of a fully Responsible Government in India. Although the younger section demurred to it and asked for complete independence, the difference was one of sentiment rather than of substance, for the Nehru Constitution fully provided for the government of Indians, by the Indians, and for the Indians. The discussion following the publication of the Nehru Constitution and criticisms directed against it revealed the all-important fact that on the question of immediate grant of Responsible Government, the whole of India stood united, the difference being only in respect of details.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted, the sentiment of complete independence gradually gained ground. As mentioned above, the Indian National Congress had declared independence as India's goal in the Madras session in 1927. Since then it was reaffirmed in the Provincial Conferences

of the Panjab, Delhi and U. P. A very interesting incident took place when the question was being discussed by the U. P. Muslim All-Parties' Conference held at Kanpur in November, 1928. When some members opposed the goal of independence, the women delegates, from behind the *Purdah*, sent a written statement to the President saying that if men had not the courage to fight for national independence, they would come out of *Purdah*, and take their place in the struggle for independence. This had the desired effect and the resolution declaring independence as goal was passed with one single dissentient voice, that of (Sir) Muhammad Shafi. The younger section led by Jawarharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose organized an Independence League and carried on propaganda in favour of independence.[4]

This nation-wide sentiment for independence also found expression in the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in December, 1928. In view of the strong sentiment held on the subject, Gandhi, by way of compromise, suggested that the Dominion Status be accepted provided the British Parliament accepts the Nehru Constitution in its entirety within a year. He therefore moved the following resolution :

"This Congress having considered the Constitution recommended by the All-Parties' Committee Report welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations, and whilst adhering to the resolution relating to Complete Independence passed at the Madras Congress, approves of the Constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

"Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, this Congress will adopt the Constitution if it is accepted

in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December, 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by the date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent Non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon.

"Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of the propaganda for Complete Independence."

But even though Gandhi declared that he would join the movement for independence in case the ultimatum given by the Congress is rejected, his proposal was vigorously opposed by the younger section led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose. An amendment was moved by the latter to the effect that the Congress would be content with nothing short of independence. The amendment was lost by 973 votes to 1350. Even as it is, the large number of votes cast in opposition to veteran leaders like Gandhi and Motilal Nehru shows the rising strength of the Left Wing in the Congress. But Subhas Bose claimed even some thing more, and observed: "The amendment was lost by 973 votes to 1350—but the vote could hardly be called a free one, as the followers of the Mahatma made it a question of confidence and gave out that if the Mahatma was defeated, he would retire from the Congress. Many people therefore voted for his resolution. not out of conviction, but because they did not want to be a party to forcing the Mahatma out of the Congress." Bose believed that the decision of the Congress was a mistake. For while "only madness or folly could have led one to hope that the mighty British Government would concede even Dominion Home Rule without a struggle," the Congress let slip the great opportunity of commencing it while "there was tremendous enthusiasm all over the country." He pointed out that attendance in the Calcutta Session was the largest since the inception of the Congress and the President-

elect on arrival was given "an ovation which would excite the envy of Kings and dictators." "Everyone had expected the Congress to act boldly." and "a procession of 10,000 workers visited the Congress pandal to demonstrate their solidarity with the struggle for national freedom." "But all these signs of upheaval made no impression on the leaders," for "while the country was ready, the leaders were not." "The Mahatma, unfortunately for his countrymen, did not see light" and his "temporising resolution" "only served to kill precious time." "The decision that should have been made soon after the appointment of the Simon Commission—and certainly not later than the Calcutta Congress—was not made till the Lahore Congress in December, 1929. But by then the situation was to deteriorate."[5]

The above reflections of Bose no doubt represent the views of the Left Wing of the Congress led by Jawaharlal and himself. But sufficient data are not available to pass any judgement on the value or justice of their criticism, for apart from the great enthusiasm displayed by a large body during the Congress session, which, after all, cannot be regarded by itself as a very important factor, it is difficult to maintain, on the basis of known facts, that a struggle begun early in 1929 would have been a wiser course, or even had any better chance of success than that achieved by the campaign of Civil Disobedience launched in 1930.

## III. OTHER ACTIVITIES IN 1929.

The Compromise Resolution of the Calcutta Congress put a stop to active political agitation in 1929, but the ardour and enthusiasm for national struggle found an outlet in other directions. First, there was a sudden revival of revolutionary activity.[6] It may be mentioned that Lala Lajpat Rai was severely struck by the Police on

30 October, 1928, while leading an anti-Simon demonstration at Lahore, and his death, shortly afterwards on 17 November, was generally believed to be due to the blow he received. Mr. Saunders, who was the Assistant Superintendent at the time, was assassinated at Lahore. A bomb was thrown in the Assembly Hall at Delhi during a sitting, and two young men, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt, were arrested for the crime. A large number of young men were also arrested all over India and an All-India Conspiracy Case was started at Lahore about the middle of 1929. Bhagat Singh was a nephew of Ajit Singh and leader of the Youth movement in the Panjab, and the fearless and defiant attitude shown by him and his comrades during their trial made a deep impression on the public. Prisoners headed by Bhagat Singh resorted to hunger strike as a protest against their treatment in prison. When their condition became serious there was an intense agitation throughout India. Besides an intensive Press Campaign, meetings and demonstrations were held all over the country demanding humane treatment of political prisoners. Ultimately all the hunger-strikers agreed to take food, except one young man, Jatin Das of Calcutta, who stuck to the last, and died on September 13, 1929. The news of his death produced a wave of intense grief and commotion all over India. As his dead body was removed from Lahore to Calcutta for cremation, thousands assembled at every Railway Station to pay their homage. The most touching of the numerous messages received on the occasion was one from the family of Terence McSwiney, the Irish revolutionary, who had met his death under similar conditions. The laconic message ran : "Family of Terence McSwiney have heard with grief and pride of the death of Jatin Das. Freedom will come."[7] It is somewhat remarkable that Gandhi did not approve of

the hunger-strike. He studiously omitted any reference to the martyrdom of Jatin Das in his speeches and writings and no mention of it was made in his *Young India*.[8] But Jatin Das did not sacrifice his life in vain. Even the Government was moved for the time being, and promised to revise the regulations about political prisoners. The regulations were ultimately changed, and the prisoners were divided into three classes in respect of the treatment in jails. In actual practice, however, not much improvement was effected in the lot of political prisoners.[9]

The death of Jatin Das also gave a fillip to the Youth Movement. Throughout 1929 Youth and Student organisations grew up all over India and Congresses and Conferences were held at Calcutta, Poona, Ahmadabad, Lahore, Nagpur, Amraoti, and several places in Madras. In December, 1929, an All-India Congress of Students was held at Lahore. presided over by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.[10]

In addition to revolutionary activities and Youth movements, there continued, throughout the year 1929, widespread unrest in the labour world resulting in numerous strikes, mostly organized by the Communist Party in India, to which reference has been made above."[11]

In the meantime a heavy gale was blowing in the Congress camp. In Bengal the repeated defeats of the Ministry led to the dissolution of the Bengal Legislative Council in May, 1929. Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Congress party in the Legislative Assembly, instructed the Bengal Congress Party to fight the elections. This they did with the result that the Congress Party came back with added strength, and some of the Nationalist Muslims, defeated in the election of 1926, regained their seats. But suddenly on 15 July,1929, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution calling upon the Congressmen to resign their seats. There were many surprising fea-

tures in it. In the first place, no attempt was made to invite the opinions of the Congress Parties in different legislatures, nor was even any notice given to them of the proposed change. Secondly, even Motilal Nehru acquiesced in the resolution, though only two months before he had encouraged the Bengal Congress Party to fight the elections and enjoined upon them to recapture some of the Muslim seats. The All-India Congress Committee, to which the question was referrred for final decision, met on 26 July, 1929, rescinded the resolution, and referred the whole question to the Congress. But the coalition of Motilal Nehru and Gandhi in favour of the boycott of the Council plainly showed the emergence of Gandhi and his creed once again into active politics of the Congress. The backing up of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for the Presidentship of the next Congress was another important manoeuvre on the part of Gandhi. Jawaharlal had been a devoted follower of Gandhi, but since his return from Europe in December, 1927, he called himself a Socialist and joined the Left Wing. As mentioned above, he and Subhas Bose led this Wing, maintained the Independence League and openly opposed Gandhi in the Calcutta Congress. But somehow or other Gandhi won him over, and after he accepted the Presidentship of the Congress he became a consistent and unfailing supporter of Gandhi. Thus Subhas Bose and Nehru parted company and the former remained the sole leader of the younger section and the Left Wing of the Congress. There was also a split in the Congress rank in Bengal. There, too, a section under J.M. Sen Gupta became devoted adherents of Gandhi, and Subhas Bose remained the leader of the other. Though Subhas was thus isolated, he continued his duty as a Left Wing leader by organizing opposition to Gandhi on important questions of public policy.

## IV. THE VICEROY'S DECLARATION OF 31 OCTOBER, 1929.

In June, 1929, the Labour Party came into Power in Britain. Ramsay Macdonald, the Prime Minister, invited the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to London for consultation. Evidently, by a sort of pre-arrangement, Sir John Simon wrote to the Prime Minister asking for the extension of the terms of reference so that the methods for the adjustment of future relationship between British India and the States might be fully examined by the Commission. Simon further suggested that after the publication of the Commission's Report, a Conference should be arranged between the representatives of His Majesty's Government and representatives of British India and the States, for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals to be submitted by the Cabinet to the Parliament. The Cabinet agreed to both the suggestions and Lord Irwin returned to India. Shortly after his arrival he issued a statement on 31 October, 1929.

It referred to the Cabinet's acceptance of Simon's proposals and the summoning of a Conference on the lines proposed by him. But the most important part of his statement is the following declaration : "I am authorized on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's Constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status."

This declaration was strongly criticized by a powerful section of the British Press, and both the Conservative and Liberal Parties were opposed to it. A debate was raised on the statement in both Houses of Parliament, and though it was generally conceded that the Dominion Status should be regarded as the ideal, the issue of the declaration at that moment was regarded as unwise and

fraught with danger. The Secretary of State won a technical victory, as the declaration was held to be unassailable in theory, and he even remarked in course of a fighting speech, that the Birkenhead spirit no longer inspired or characterized the policy of the Government towards India. But the debate made it quite clear that in the face of the combined opposition of the two great parties the Government would not dare to take any immediate step towards Dominion Status. Indeed the Government assured the Parliament that conditions of conceding further reforms as laid down in the declaration of 1917 held good until they were changed by Parliament.

The declaration was, however, very favourably received in India. Coming as it did after the ultimatum of the Congress, due to expire on December 31, the Viceroy's statement, taken as a whole, was naturally interpreted in India as a conciliatory gesture on the part of the Labour Government to offer Dominion Status before the Congress unequivocally declares in its next session for independence and complete severance of relations with Britain. A Conference of the leaders of all parties was held at Delhi in November, and in accordance with the decision of an overwhelming majority, a manifesto was issued under the signature of the most prominent leaders, including Gandhi and Motilal Nehru. It expressed appreciation of the sincerity underlying the Viceroy's pronouncement and offered co-operation to evolve a Dominion Constitution for India. The signatories expressed their belief that the business of the proposed Round Table Conference would be 'not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India.' They also urged that a general amnesty should be declared before the Conference meets, and the Indian National Congress should have predominant representation in the Conference. The Left Wingers were opposed to this

manifesto. Jawaharlal at first did not agree to sign it, and even intended to issue a counter-manifesto together with Subhas Bose. But Gandhi prevailed upon him to sign the leaders' manifesto. A separate manifesto was, however, issued over the signature of D. S. Kitchlew (Lahore), Abdul Bari (Patna) and Subhas Bose opposing the acceptance of Dominion Status and participation in the Round Table Conference. But the leaders' manifesto (known as Delhi Manifesto) won the general approval and support of the country as a whole. It is interesting to note, however, that Jinnah's reaction to the Viceroy's declaration on October 31, 1929, was somewhat different. He felt satisfied at the declaration of Dominion Status as goal and with the procedure of the Round Table Conference for thrashing out the details. Moreover, Jinnah also agreed with a section of the Moderates who regarded as unwise the apparent implication in the Delhi Manifesto that the Congress would not co-operate if the conditions stated were not satisfied. Indeed this was made clear beyond doubt by the Working Committee which regarded the conditions as *sine qua non* for any co-operation and further stated that the offer held good only up to the date of the next Congress. Jinnah, along with the Moderates, thought that the conditions were desirable maximum, but should not be insisted upon to the point of refusing co-operation.

So far as the Congress was concerned, the Delhi Manifesto was merely a preliminary step to an interview between the Viceroy and Gandhi, accompanied by Motilal Nehru, which had already been arranged by Vithalbhai Patel. The two Congress leaders, who met the Viceroy on December 23, sought for a definite assurance that Dominion Status would be granted to India. But the Viceroy was unable to give that assurance. It is generally believed that this was due to the strong opposition in

Britain to the Viceroy's declaration of October 31, 1929, mentioned above.[12]

A foreign writer, Louis Fischer, referring to this interview, has described how, in the meantime, Lord Reading led a combined Tory and Liberal attack in Parliament against the policy of the Labour Government who could not command a majority in the House of Commons. So on December 23, the Viceroy told Gandhi, Jinnah, and others who met him, "that he was unable to prejudge or commit the (Round Table) Conference at all to any particular line."[13]

But whatever may be the reason, no guarantee of immediate Dominion Status was forthcoming, and the two Congress leaders returned empty-handed. Gandhi now declared himself definitely for independence, and thereby, after nearly seven years, regained his position of undisputed supremacy in the Congress. "I have burnt my boats" said, he.

## V. THE CONGRESS SESSION OF 1929.

The Congress met at Lahore in December, 1929, in a tense atmosphere. There was an intense fervour all over the country over the impending declaration of independence —a fervour increased, rather than kept down, by the indiscriminate arrests of political workers by the Government. The choice of Jawaharlal Nehru, an embodiment of youthful ardour and indomitable enthusiasm for independence, lent a majestic glamour to the vast concourse assembled at the Congress Pandal. The resolution which embodied the spirit of the audience was worded as follows :

"This Congress endorses the action of the Working Committee in connection with the Manifesto signed by party leaders, including Congressmen, on the Viceregal pronouncement of the 31st October relating to Dominion Status, and appreciates the efforts of the Viceroy towards a settlement of the national movement for Swaraj. The

Congress, however, having considered all that has since happened and the result of the meeting between Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders and the Viceroy, is of opinion that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference. This Congress, therefore, in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year, declares that the word 'Swaraj' in Article I of the Congress Constitution shall mean Complete Independence, and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's Report to have lapsed, and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India. As a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for Independence, and in order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of creed, this Congress resolves upon complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and Committees constituted by the Government, and calls upon Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections, and directs the present Congress members of the Legislatures and Committees to resign their seats. This Congress appeals to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress, and authorises the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary."

There is no doubt that the proposed revival of Civil Disobedience in the Lahore Congress was Gandhi's handiwork. He was somewhat upset by the recrudescence of violence in the country[14] and thought that the best way of preventing it was to canalize the resurgent spirit of youth into a

non-violent campaign. He stated that "Civil Disobedience alone can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime, since there is a party of violence in the country which will not listen to speeches, resolutions, or conferences, but believes only in direct action."

As regards the adoption of independence as the goal of India it may be doubted whether Gandhi was really converted to the idea. It has been suggested that his heart was not in it, but he adopted this merely to fall in with the majority. Subsequent events seem to support this view.[14a]

Yet, for the time being, the Left Wing of the Congress seemed to have won over Gandhi to its ideal and the Congress session of Lahore set a seal upon the future destiny of India. The new ideal, irrevocably adopted by the nation, was hailed with befitting solemnity. An epic grandeur was added to it when, as the clock struck midnight on December 31, and the date of ultimatum issued by the Congress expired, the President of the Congress came out in a solemn procession to the banks of the Ravi and hoisted the tri-colour flag of Indian independence in the presence of a mammoth gathering that faced the biting cold of Lahore winter to witness the historic scene. "As the flag slowly went up the staff, a thrill of joy shook the vast audience, and imbued them with a new hope and a distant vision of the glorious future of India."

The Nehru Constitution got a decent burial in the hands of the Congress at Lahore. Apart from discarding Dominion Status in favour of the goal of complete independence, the Congress also definitely rejected its recommendations about the solution of the communal problem. The resolution by the Congress ran as follows :

"In view of the lapse of the Nehru Report it is unnecessary to declare the policy of the Congress regarding communal questions, the Congress believing that in an independent India communal question can only be solved

on strictly national lines. But as the Sikhs in particular, and the Muslims and the other minorities in general, had expressed dissatisfaction over the solution of communal questions proposed in the Nehru Report, this Congress assures the Sikhs, the Muslims and other minorities, that no solution thereof in any future constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned."

Bereft of jugglery of words, it plainly put a premium on the intransigence of the communalists by giving them a power of veto on any proposed solution of the communal problem. The Congress should have realized by this time that it was beyond human ingenuity to devise a scheme of communal settlement which would "give full satisfaction to the parties concerned." The Congress, by passing the Lahore resolution, practically precluded itself from accepting any Constitution that might be proposed in future; and it is difficult to imagine a more amazing instance of a political *harikari* than was done by the greatest political organization in India in 1929. It is no less amazing that this and other aspects of the Lahore resolutions received very little attention from the leaders and people who seem to have been carried away by the formal declaration of the ideal of complete independence.

Apart from the great impetus given to the sentiment for independence, the value of the Lahore Congress may justly be questioned by a discerning critic. Although independence was declared to be the goal, no definite programme for achieving it was laid down. Indeed no thought seems to have been bestowed on the all-important question of how to attain independence.[15] The old twin armours,—the negative one, the boycott of Councils, and the positive one, the Civil Disobedience—were called into being, without any thought to avoid the pitfalls which cansed

their failure in the past. Everything indicated the revival and triumph of the old Gandhiite party. The ground they had lost by the success of the Swarajya Party in 1923 was once more gained, but no proper consideration was given to the good that the Swarajya party had done in the past and might do again in future. The defeat sustained by Gandhi on this point in the All-India Congress Committee in July, only five months before, was now avenged—due mainly to the hopeless split in the Congress organization in the Provinces, specially Bengal, which was a stronghold of the Swarajya Party. It is interesting to note that whereas in July both J. M. Sen Gupta and Subhas Bose offered a strenuous opposition to Gandhi's proposal, now the former supported the policy of boycott of Councils.

As regards the positive weapon of Civil Disobedience, no programme was fixed,—neither the date of its commencement nor the nature of its operation. Everything was nominally left to the All-India Congress Committee but practically to Gandhi. As one studies the activities of the Congress from this time onward no doubt is left on one's mind that once more the Congress had surrendered its judgement to the safe-keeping of Gandhi. Undeterred by the past experience of hopeless muddles in which Gandhi placed himself and the great national organization on more than one occasion, he was chosen to be the Dictator, a position which he maintained, with rare intervals, during the next thirteen years. The saint Gandhi had once more triumphed over the statesman Gandhi. Nehru observes : "He (Gandhi) did give us the impression that civil disobedience, when it came, need not be stopped because of a sporadic act of violence……… This assurance went a long way in satisfying many of us."[16]

Such an understanding must have been vague and of a personal or private character.

Some incidents following the Congress session left no doubt that Gandhi had seriously set upon his task of dominating the Congress. By winning over Jawaharlal he had considerably weakened the Left Wing of the Congress which alone dared raise its voice against him. A further step in the same direction was taken by him when he deliberately excluded all the Left Wingers, including Srinivasa Iyengar and Subhas Bose, from the new Working Committee. There was a strong feeling in the All-India Congress Committee that at least these two should be retained, but Gandhi proved adamant. He declared that he wanted a Committee that would be completely of one mind, i.e., his mind. However desirable this ideal might be in an Executive Body like the Cabinet, it was hardly appropriate to a deliberative body, at least to the extent to which Gandhi carried it. The hands of the All-India Congress Committee were forced as Gandhi wanted that his list should be voted as a whole. He practically made it a question of confidence, and as the All-India Congress Committee was unwilling or unable to sacrifice his leadership it had to accept his demand.[17]

The new Working Committee met on January 2, 1930. The first thing that it did was to take steps to implement the Congress resolution on the boycott of Councils. It called upon the Registered voters to compel the resignation of those who might not respond to the Congress appeal for resignation, as well as to refrain from participating in the ensuing elections to the Legislatures. As a result of the Congress mandate, by February, 1930, 21 members of the Legislative Assembly resigned along with 9 from the Council of State and 142 from the Provincial Legislatures, namely Bengal, 34 ; Bihar and Orissa, 31 ; C. P., 20 ; Madras, 20 ; U. P., 16 ; Assam, 12 ; Bombay, 6 ; Panjab, 2 ; Burma, 1.

In order to hold up the ideal of independence before the nation the Working Committee decided that 26th of

January should be observed all over India as the *Purna Swaraj* Day (day of full independence). A manifesto, prepared by Gandhi and adopted by the Working Committee, was to be read on that occasion to the people in the villages and towns all over the country, and the assent of the audience was to be taken by show of hands. It read as follows :—

"We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives the people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.

"India has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people is out of all proportion to our income. Our average income is seven pice (less than two-pence) per day, and of the heavy taxes we pay, 20 per cent. are raised from the land revenue derived from the peasantry, and 3 per cent. from the Salt Tax which falls most heavily on the poor.

"Village industries, such as hand-spinning, have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts ; and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the crafts thus destroyed.

"Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. The British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for Bri-

tish manufactures, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of the exchange ratio, which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

"Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people. The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority. The rights of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to us, and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and cannot return to their homes. All administrative talent is killed, and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships.

"Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us.

"Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly, and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression, or even defend our homes and families from the attacks of thieves, robbers and miscreants.

"We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. We recognise, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence even under provocation,

the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We therefore hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj."[18]

Thus, every Indian was to make a declaration of complete independence and take a pledge of loyalty to the Indian National Congress and to the sacred fight for India's liberty.

The Independence Day was solemnly observed and evoked great enthusiasm all over the country. But the ink with which the manifesto was written had hardly dried when Gandhi issued a statement in his paper, *Young India*, which, by no stretch of imagination, could be made compatible with the annual declaration.

He enumerated eleven items of administrative reforms and appealed to the Viceroy in the following words : "This is by no means an exhaustive list of the pressing needs, but let the Viceroy satisfy us with regard to these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear no talk of Civil Disobedience ; and the Congress will heartily participate in any Conference where there is a perfect freedom of expression and demand." One might rub his eyes with wonder and ask himself,—is it the same Gandhi who refused to attend the Round Table Conference save on the express promise of the grant of Dominion Status ?

Again, however important might be the specific reforms demanded by Gandhi,[19] does it lie in the mouth of those who were pledged to fight for *Purna Swaraj* or complete freedom, to bargain over certain administrative reforms under the British Government and promise to abandon the fight as soon as these reforms were conceded ? It is impossible to discover any consistency between Gandhi's statement and the Congress resolution on any rational basis. Curiously enough, the official history of the Congress, written by a devoted admirer of Gandhi mentions Gandhi's

statement and enumerates the eleven points, but has not a word to say about its incongruous character. On the other hand, he deepens the mystery by saying that the eleven points comprise the terms which Gandhi communicated to Bomanji who undertook to negotiate with Mr. Ramsay Macdonald as early as January, 1930.[19a]

Evidently, Gandhi's statement did not attract serious notice as the country was passing through excited times. Arrests were going on and Subhas Bose and eleven others were sentenced to imprisonment for a year. The under-trial prisoners in Mirat were committed to the Sessions. A large number of Congress members had defied the mandate to resign the seats in the Legislatures.

The Working Committee met again at Sabarmati on February 14-16 and passed the following resolution on Civil Disobedience :

"In the opinion of the Working Committee, Civil Disobedience should be initiated and controlled by those who believe in non-violence for the purpose of achieving *Purna Swaraj*, as an article of faith, and as the Congress contains in its organisation not merely such men and women but also those who accept non-violence as a policy essential in the existing circumstances in the country, the Working Committee welcomes the proposal of Mahatma Gandhi and authorises him and those working with him who believe in non-violence as an article of faith to the extent above indicated, to start Civil Disobedience as and when they desire and in the manner and to the extent they decide. The Working Committee trusts that when the campaign is actually in action, all Congressmen and others will extend to the civil resisters their full co-operation in every way possible and that they will observe and preserve complete non-violence notwithstanding any provocation that may be offered. The Working Committee further hopes that, in the event of a mass movement taking place, all

those who are rendering voluntary co-operation to the Government, such as lawyers, and those who are receiving so-called benefits from it, such as students, will withdraw their co-operation or renounce benefits as the case may be and throw themselves into the final struggle for freedom.

"The Working Committee trusts that in the event of the leaders being arrested and imprisoned, those who are left behind and have the spirit of sacrifice and service in them will carry on the Congress organisation and guide the movement to the best of their ability."[20]

The Working Committee thus authorised only Gandhi and his followers in faith to start Civil Disobedience. But the AICC, which met at Ahmadabad on March 21, 1930, i.e. after Gandhi had begun his march for Dandi, not only endorsed the resolution of the Working Committee, but somewhat widened its scope. They expressed the hope "that the whole country will respond to the action taken by Gandhi" and authorised "the Provincial Congress Committees to organise and undertake such Civil Disobedience as to them may seem proper and in the manner that may appear to them to be most. suitable."

## B. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE MOVEMENT

### I. VIOLATION OF SALT LAWS

The whole country was agog with excitement over the Civil Disobedience movement decided upon by the Working Committee. All eyes were turned towards the Sabarmati Ashram, for Gandhi alone could determine the hour, place, and the precise issue on which the Civil Disobedience campaign would be launched. But while the country was in a state of animated suspense, Gandhi could not make up his mind. Asked by poet Rabindra Nath, he said : "I am thinking furiously, day and night, and I do not see any light coming out of the darkness." At last light dawned upon him six weeks later. He decided

to launch the *Satyagraha* campaign by manufacturing salt at Dandi, a village on the sea-coast in Gujarat about 200 miles from Sabarmati, and thereby openly break the salt-law. He wrote a long letter to the Viceroy on March 2, 1930, communicating this decision.[21] This letter must be regarded as a curious document from whatever point of view one may look at it. After enumerating the evils done by the British Government, more or less on the lines indicated by his "Eleven Points,"[22] he asked for immediate removal of those evils. As an eminent historian has rightly observed : "For a lay man, who is not a saint, the eleven points aud the letter are in clear contradiction of the Lahore Resolution."[23] This was recognized by the Congressmen who were not blind devotees of the Mahatma. The letter perplexed even Jawaharlal Nehru, who was constrained to remark : "What was the point of making a list of our political and social reforms when we were talking in terms of independence ? Did Gandhiji mean the same thing when he used this term as we did, or did we speak a different language?"[24] Here Jawaharlal hit upon the real crux of the problem. It is evident from Gandhi's letter that though he supported 'independence' (*Purna Swaraj*) he had no clear conception of it, as distinct from the Dominion Status. In any case he did not distinguish between the two, as is clear from his letter to the Viceroy. Lest the Viceroy dismiss his appeal on the ground of the Congress resolution on Independence, he reassured him : "But the resolution of Independence should cause no alarm, if the word Dominion Status mentioned in your announcement had been used in its accepted sense. For, has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen that Dominion Status is virtual independence ?"

All this must appear as very strange to an ordinary mortal, unacquainted with the ways of saints, when he

remembers that Gandhi, who wrote this letter. fought a battle royal against the Left Wing members in the Congress session of 1928 on the issue of Independence *vs.* Dominion Status. Indeed Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy lends colour to the supposition that he supported the Congress resolution on Independence in deference to the wishes of the majority, but his heart was not in it. Nor was he really anxious for coming to a final issue with Government. After announcing that if his letter makes no appeal to the Viceroy's heart to the extent of removing the evils of British rule enumerated by him, he would proceed with his followers to disregard the Salt Laws on the eleventh day of March, he added: "If you will care to discuss matters with me and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain, on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you." Gandhi took special care to send the letter by a messenger, Mr. Reginald Reynolds, a young Englishman living in the *Ashram* at Sabarmati. The letter can by no means be reconciled with the Congress resolution either in letter or in spirit. It does not speak the language of a fighter or of a politician, but that of a saint. Lord Irwin had no fear of the saint, and assumed a strong patronizing and almost a dictatorial tone in his brief reply to Gandhi. He refused to see Gandhi and regretted that he (Gandhi) should have been "contemplating a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace." Even to this Gandhi sent a rejoinder: "On bended knees I asked for bread and received a stone instead. *The English Nation responds only to force,* and I am not surprised by the Viceregal reply. The only public peace the Nation knows is the peace of the public prison."[25]

The die was cast and there was now no retreat. Gandhi decided to start on foot from Sabarmati, with a band of selected volunteers, and march by stages to

Dandi, more than 200 miles distant, to manufacture salt in defiance of law. For about a week the Sabarmati Ashram witnessed a concourse of thousands of visitors, including leading Indians and newspaper correspondents from different parts of India as well as from abroad. It presented a unique spectacle.

On March 12, 1930, Gandhi with 79 male and female members[26] left the Sabarmati Ashram on foot and reached the sea at Dandi on 5 April. It was a veritable triumphal progress. The villagers flocked from all sides, sprinkled the roads, strewed leaves on them, and as the pilgrims passed, sank on their knees. Over three hundred village headmen gave up their jobs. Early on the morning of the sixth of April Gandhi and his party dipped into the sea-water, returned to the beach and picked up some salt left by the waves. It was a technical breach of law but the way in which the whole thing was managed was of great significance. The slow march over 241 miles in 24 days with full publicity to the world that it was a deliberate act of defiance to the mighty British Government, made a profound appeal to all—both leaders and massess—, and as Gandhi intended, it was a signal to the nation. Salt laws were broken in many places, salt was made in pans in the cities, and mass arrests and other repressions followed. Sixty thousand political prisoners were put in jails. Indians remained non-violent despite beatings, kicks and arrests.[27]

Whatever one might think of the inexplicable vacillations of Gandhi on the eve of his projected expedition to Dandi, it must be admitted that the plan was a grand conception and it was superbly executed with a consummate, skill. The slow march on foot from village to village was, by itself, an automatic and intensive propaganda carried on in the neighbourhood, and roused the entire countryside to a realistic sense of the coming struggle for *Swaraj* contemplated by the Congress. As wide publicity

was given in the press to every detail of the march and display of the unique devotion to Gandhi and enthusiasm for the cause he had espoused, among the masses, the story of the 'Pilgrim's Journey to Dandi' worked up the feelings of the country as a whole, such as nothing else could. At first the Government and their henchmen looked upon the whole thing with ridicule and contempt and the editor of an Anglo-Indian Daily, the *Statesman*, made the taunting remark that "the Mahatma could go on boiling sea-water till Dominion Status was attained." But ere long this scoffing attitude changed to a nervous apprehension. The technical breach of the Salt Law by Gandhi on April 6, 1930, was a signal for the country-wide repetition of the same. Where natural conditions did not permit of the illegal manufacture of salt, violation of other laws was resorted to. J. M. Sen Gupta, the Mayor of Calcutta, defied the Law of Sedition by openly reading seditious literature in a public meeting. An intensive campaign was started on an extensive scale for the boycott of liquor and of intoxicating drugs, as well as of foreign cloth and British goods of all sorts, with the help of volunteer organization of picketers.

Besides these activities which were generally followed all over India, there were special ones in various localities. In defiance of forest laws people began to cut down timber in C. P. and Bombay. A campaign for non-payment of taxes and land-revenue was started in Gujarat, U. P. and Midnapur District in Bengal. In the North-West Frontier Province, the home of the fierce warlike Pathans, the red-shirt volunteers, organized by Abdul Ghaffar Khan ( better known as .Frontier Gandhi ), followed, in a non-violent manner, an intense anti-Government movement in various ways including non-payment of taxes.

But Gandhi made the violation of salt-law his chief object. He announced his intention of raiding the salt depot

of Dharsana in Surat District. As usual he communicated his decision in a long letter to the Viceroy and again requested him "to remove the salt tax and the prohibition on private salt-making." Otherwise, said he, he would reluctantly set out for Dharsana with his followers and demand possession of the Salt Works. But before Gandhi set out for Dharsana, he was arrested and put into prison. Abbas Tyabji took up Gandhi's place as leader of the Salt *Satyagrahis*, but he was also arrested. Then Sarojini Naidu hurried to Dharsana and directed the raid on May 21. 2500 volunteers from all parts of Gujarat took part in it. A series of raids were made on the Wadala Salt Depot. It began on May 22, but the most demonstrative raid took place on June 1 when nearly 15,000 participated in the action.[28] Many other Salt raids took place. Everywhere the volunteeers were mercilessly beaten and arrested in large numbers, to which detailed reference will be made later.

On April 10, 1930, Gandhi had made a special appeal in his paper *Young India* to the women of India to take up the work of picketing and spinning. The effect was almost miraculous. Thousands of women responded, and even those of orthodox and aristocratic families, who had never before come out of their seclusion, offered themselves for arrest and imprisonment. It took by surprise not only the Government but even the Indians themselves. Miss Mary Campbell, who had carried on temperance work in India for forty years, has vividly described the awakening of the women in Delhi where alone 1600 women were imprisoned. Dhangopal Mukherjee has given a lively description of a meeting in Bombay where a large number of ladies of high class were holding a *purdah* meeting to discuss the situation, while the men were waiting on the other side of the screen dividing the two. The decision of the ladies was announced in

a practical manner by suddenly removing the screen, and exposing them in the full glare of light to the gaze of the bewildered throng of men. Foreign tourists in India, like H. N. Brailsford and G. Slocombe, deeply impressed by the great change that had been wrought on the women-folk of India, almost overnight, observed that if the Civil Disobedience movement had accomplished nothing else but the emancipation of the women of India, it would have fully justified itself. The awakening of women not only added to the number of civil resisters to a considerable extent, but their examples also redoubled the energy and activities of the men and spurred them on to greater efforts and sacrifices for the country.

## II. THE TERRORISM OF GOVERNMENT

Before a month had passed since the opening of the campaign by Gandhi, the Government realized the gravity of the situation caused by a wide national movement, and struck hard, in a ruthless manner. The Working Committee of the Congress, in its meeting on 21st January, 1931, gave a summary of the brutal measures in the following appreciation of the sufferers : "The Committee takes this opportunity to record its high appreciation of the courage and firmness with which the men and women and even the children of the country have faced Government persecution that is accountable for the imprisonment of about 75 thousand innocent men and women, numerous indiscriminate and brutal *lathi*-charges, various forms of torture even of those in custody, firing resulting in the maiming and deaths of hundreds of people, looting of property, burning of houses and marching of moving columns of armed Police and *sawars* and British soldiers in several rural parts, depriving people of the right of public speech and association by prohibiting meetings and processions and declaring Congress and allied associations unlawful, forfeiting their movables and occupying their houses and offices."[29] For the sake of convenience

the Government measures may be reviewed under three separate heads :

1. Repressive Laws.

i. On April 27, 1930, the Government passed an Emergency Ordinance, called Press Ordinance, reproducing the stringent provisions of the repealed Press Act of 1910. According to an official statement in July, 1930, securities aggregating to two lakhs and forty thousand rupees were taken from 131 newspapers, and nine newspapers declined to pay and suspended publication.[30]

ii. The Congress Organizations were declared unlawful and Government was authorized to confiscate their property.

But these Ordinances could not paralyze the activities of the Congress organizations. As they could not function openly, their activities like raising funds, recruiting volunteers etc. were conducted in secret. Meetings and processions were held in defiance of the law, and newspapers, bulletins, leaflets etc. were printed and distributed in spite of official ban. In some places, like Bombay, Congress propaganda was carried on by means of the radio, and the Police could not locate the transmitting stations.

2. Arrests.

The defiance of law led to wholesale arrests. Even according to official figures more than sixty thousand were put behind prison bars. But this figure is somewhat misleading for it gives only the number of those who were directly charged with political offence. But many *Satyagrahis* or Civil Resisters were sentenced on charges like stealing, exercising intimidation, rioting etc., and they are not included in the above number.[31] These false charges were not challenged as the *Satyagrahis*, true to their creed, refused to take any part in the court proceedings. The Working Committee estimated the number of those imprisoned as

75,000, as mentioned above.

Most of the leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, were in prison, and finally Gandhi was arrested on May 4, 1930. The whole country seemed to be in gaol.

3. Terrorism by Government.

But the prosecutions under the Ordinances or 'lawless' laws formed only a minor part of the devices adopted by the Government to crush the movement. They inaugurated a veritable reign of terror and employed both Police and the military to cow down the people by most ruthless and indiscriminate brutal assaults on unarmed and unresisting men and women. The atrocities committed by the agents of the Government beggar all description. The heads of unarmed men and women *Satyagrahis* were the target of blows from heavy sticks, either iron-shod or covered with leather, which could, and often did, split the skulls. In many localities the Congress agencies had to set up hospitals and organize ambulance corps for the victims of such brutal assault.

Not infrequently there was firing upon unarmed crowd. In answer to a question by S. C. Mitra regarding the number of cases of firing, the Hon. Mr. H. G. Haig furnished the following table.[32]

CASUALTIES AMONGST THE PUBLIC.

| *Locality* | *Date* | *Killed* | *Wounded* | *Remarks* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Madras City | April 27th | 2 | 6 | 1 died subsequently |
| Karachi | ,, 16th | 1 | 6 | ,, |
| Calcutta | ,, 1st | 7 | 59 | ,, |
| | ,, 15th | ... | 3 | ,, |
| 24-Parganas | ,, 24th | 1 | 3 | |
| Chittagong | ,, 18th, 19th & 20th | 10 | 2 | Both died subsequently |
| Peshawar | ,, 23rd | 30 | 33 | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chittagong | „ 24th | 1 | ... | |
| Madras | May 30th | ... | 2 | |
| Sholapur | „ 8th | 12 | 28 | |
| Wadala-Salt Pans | „ 24th | ... | 1 | |
| Bhendy Bazaar | „ 26th,27th | 5 | 67 | |
| Howrah | „ 6th | ... | 5 | |
| Chittagong | „ 7th | 4 | 6 | 3 died subsequently |
| Mymensingh | „ 14th | 1 | Between 30 to 40 | |
| Midnapur (Pratapdighi) | 31st | 2 | 2 | |
| Lucknow | „ 26th | 1 | 42 | 2 died subsequently |
| Kalu-Jhelum Dts. Panjab | „ 18th | ... | 1 | |
| Rangoon | „ Last Week | 5 | 37 | |
| N.W.F. Province | | 17 | 37 | |
| Delhi | „ 6th | 4 | 40 | |

A typical instance is furnished by the well-known incident at Peshawar on 23 April, 1930. There was a demonstration on the arrest of some local leaders. It was non-violent, and when the crowds were returning, several armoured cars full of soldiers rushed full tilt into the crowd, without warning, from behind; killing three people on the spot and wounding a large number. Then, it was alleged by the Government, the crowd set fire to the cars. Soldiers were at once rushed to the spot and ordered to open fire. But the crowd did not run away; hundreds of them stood their ground and faced the bullets. The number of unarmed people, killed and injured, according to Government report, were respectively 30 and 33, but the popular version put it at nearly seven to ten times that figure.

Another incident in N. W. F. P. is worth mentioning.

A company of Garhwali soldiers refused to open fire on an unarmed peaceful crowd. They were at once disarmed, and sentenced by a court martial to long terms of imprisonment, ranging from 10 to 14 years.[33]

There was a second gruesome incident at Peshawar. "On 31 May, 1930, during the C. D. movement, a gentleman who was a Government servant employed in a Military Dairy, Ganga Singh Kamboj by name, was passing in a tonga in Peshawar city through the Kabuli Gate along with his children when a British Lance Corporal of K. O. Y. L. I. fired at the carriage. Two of the children,—Bibi Herpal Kaur, daughter aged 9 1/2 years, and Kaka Bachitar Singh, son, 16 months, —dropped dead like birds from a tree and the mother, Shrimati Tejkaur, was severely wounded on arm and breast, the breast being completely blown. The dead bodies of the children were taken by several thousand persons in a procession which was allowed by the Deputy Commissioner. Yet, the carriers of the bier and the funeral processionists were shot at by the Military,—without giving any previous warning to disperse,—from a distance of two yards only. The dead bodies of the children were dropped on the ground, but they were carried again and again by others. Thus 9 men were killed and 18 wounded, as per Government reply in the Legislative Assembly, from firing 17 rounds"[34]

The Government laid the blame on the shoulders of a violent mob, but refused to hold an inquiry demanded by the public. The members of a Committee of Inquiry set up by the Working Committee and presided over by Vithalbhai Patel, who had resigned his office as President of the Indian Legislative Assembly, were not allowed to proceed to the N. W. F. P. When they collected evidence from the neighbourhood and published their Report it was banned.

It is impossible here to refer in detail to the

atrocities perpetrated by the Government. But various public organizations collected facts and published reports which unfold a tale of ruthless and savage persecution unworthy of any Government which calls itself civilized. In a letter written by Gandhi to the Viceroy, published in the *Young India* of May 8, 1930, he refers to his own experience in Gujarat, confirmed by reports from Bengal, Bihar, Utkal, U.P., Delhi and Bombay, where the *Sàtyagrahis* "have been often savagely and in some cases, even indecently, assaulted." He refers to unnecessary and unprovoked firing in Karachi, Peshawar and Madras. "Bones have been broken, private parts have been squeezed," said he, "for the purpose of making volunteers give up salt." "In Bengal," he added, "unthinkable cruelties are said to have been practised in the act of snatching flags from volunteers."[35] In a small village in the district of Midnapore in Bengal, they still show a spot, held sacred in public memory, where an old woman, Matangini Hazra, leading a procession with a flag in her hand, was shot dead by the police. At first her right hand was shot, but she held the flag with the left, and a second bullet felled her on the ground with the flag still in her hand. Another old woman had cried out *Bande Mataram* from within her house. For this an English tommy entered the house and bayoneted her. Many other gruesome stories of similar atrocities in Midnapore and elsewhere are well authenticated from various sources. But it is not possible here to give more than a general picture interspersed with a few specific events here and there.

At Sholapur in Bombay, the volunteers undertook to maintain order and regulate traffic in the streets, and so came into clash with the police. Four or five policemen were done to death. This led to the declaration of Martial Law. Four men including a rich Seth were hanged and a large number of prisoners were sentenced to long

terms of imprisonment. Firing took plaee on six occasions, the casualties being 12 killed and 28 wounded.

On 31 July, 1930, a procession was taken out in Bombay in celebration of the anniversary of Tilak's death, when an order was served prohibiting it. The vast crowd of thousands then squatted on the road, and in spite of heavy rain, sat there throughout the night literally in pools of water. When the morning came, a few picked men and a hundred ladies were arrested and *lathi*-charge was made on the unarmed crowd. The arrested persons included Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, V. J. Patel, Mrs. Kamala Nehru ( wife of Jawaharlal ), Shrimati Mani Ben and Srimati Amrit Kaur.[36]

The *lathi*-charge in dispersing crowds was improved upon by a new Commissioner of Police in Bombay. "On the very first occasion after his taking over charge, the *lathi*, hitherto flourished on the body, was applied to the head, and when blood began to flow and volunteers fell reeling and rolling on the ground, the spectacle of suffering was so harrowing, and at the same time so infecting, that thousands gathered from the crowds of sight-seers in the neighbourhood and the audience swelled from five to twenty-five thousands,"[37] But as the crowd was dispersed at one place they gathered at another, and it was a job for the police to tackle the non-violent volunteers. The Maharaja of Bikaner, who witnessed the beating of the volunteers by the police in Bombay, remarked that Martial Law was much better than *lathi*-charge.

"In Madras, the beating was so indiscriminate that on one occasion a Missionary, the Rev. F. Paton, was severely beaten in the neighbourhood of a Police Station when he was watching the picketing and *lathi*-charges from near, one evening, dressed in *Khaddar* robes and wearing a hat. This was the subject of a severe attack on the methods of the police, but neither the Government

nor the police would make reparation or even acknowledge their indiscretion. In the South, a Missionary named Mr. Khaitan was served with an order to leave India and he had to depart forthwith.

"The Police made a new departure in prosecuting people as forming an unlawful assembly, by gathering together a number of picketers from various centres, putting them in a lorry, taking them a long distance from the city, and leaving them there to find their way back as well as they could without any money. In Bombay, picketing and the sealing of foreign cloth in the shops of merchants was so rigidly carried out, that, when foreign cloth was being surreptitiously removed in lorries, a boy named Babu Ganoo stood across the lorry on the Kalbadevi Road to prevent its progress ; but whoever may have driven the car, it was driven over the boy and the boy succumbed. Ever since this event occurred, Babu Ganoo Day was being celebrated every month, and it added to the list of sacred days observed by the Congress."[38]

"Local variations did exist, which were based upon differences of degree and kind,—due to environment, the personal equation of the officers concerned, the conditions of tenure of land and various other matters. South India had in one sense seen the worst of it. The *lathi*-charges as well as heavy fines and long-term sentences were an early feature, not a late development, of the movement. Bengal yielded the largest number of prisoners in the country. The measure of boycott of British cloth was highest in Bengal, and Bihar and Orissa, where the figures of import in November, 1930, fell by 95 per cent. as compared with those for November, 1929. We have already referred to Gujarat's unique part and performance in the drama of national emancipation. U. P. was the only Province where a general No-tax campaign was inaugurated, both the Zamindars and the tenants being called upon to withhold,

in October, 1930, payment of rent and revenue. The Punjab pulled its weight along with the rest. The whole-hearted adoption of non-violence by the N. W. F. Province was no less a moral than a political gain. In Bihar, the Chowkidari tax was withheld in large areas, and the Province suffered to the full from the imposition of Punitive Police and confiscation of large properties in lieu of petty sums. In the C. P., Forest Satyagraha was successfully launched and continued, in spite of heavy fines and Police excesses. Karnataka organised a No-tax campaign which was highly creditable to the Province. Three lacs of palm and date trees were cut down, 96 out of 130 Patels resigned in the Sirsi Taluka, 25 in the Siddapur Taluka, and 43 out of 63 in the Ankola Taluka, all in the North Kanara.

"More than 800 families participated in the No-tax campaign in the Kanara District. In the Siddapur and Ankola Talukas which suffered the worst, there were about 800 convictions including those of 100 ladies. The losses by reason of forfeiture of lands and homes, attachments of movable property and loss of crops amount to about 15 lacs of rupees.

"In Ankola and Siddapur, 330 families had their lands forfeited. The population involved was nearly 2,000. The lands forfeited were over 2,000 acres in extent, valued at over 8 lacs of rupees. 166 houses were also forfeited, valued at a lac and a half. The convictions were 218 and the movable property attached was valued at Rs. 20,000.

"Many farmers were ejected from their homes, some of which were used as camps by the Police. Hired labour from outside the Taluka had to be employed for reaping the crops from forfeited lands. There were 37 lady Satyagrahis in Siddapur, who fasted at the door of the persons who had bought the properties of the No-taxers.

The longest fast was for 31 days at Mavinagundi. There were 110 special police posted in Siddapur and punitive police in Ankola. Rs. 37,000 was realised on account of these punitive police. The special Ordinance relating to the non-payment of Revenue was applied to Kanara from January, 1932, to the end of the Campaign, though it was not applied in the later period to Gujarat."

"In Ankola the No-tax campaign was political in character and origin, while in Sirsi and Siddapur Talukas it was undertaken for reasons of economic and agrarian distress as well. In Kerala, the smallest of the Provinces, the banner of Civil Disobedience was kept steadily till the last day of the movement, while, at the other end, Assam, including Cachar and Sylhet, responded splendidly to the call of the Cnngress.

"Attention may now be drawn to a few outstanding events in some of these Provinces. To all of them certain factors were common,—the closing of the Cong--ress offices, the taking away of Congress papers, books, accounts and flags, *lathi*-charges, dispersal by force of public meetings, promulgation of Section 144 over whole areas, serving notices on individuals under Section 108, raids on houses, searches, seizure of printing presses, securities demanded of newspapers and presses alike. But what struck the on-looker most was that the Government of the country was being run in the interests of foreign cloth and the liquor shops. In Bengal Midnapur was specially unfortunate in the extent of repression. House-holders were imprisoned both in Bengal and in Andhrā for giving shelter, food, or water to Congress volunteers, or volunteers who had been beaten and were lying helpless. Orders to fire were issued in Bengal—in Khersai notably, on the slightest pretext. When, in Khersai, a crowd collected round a house where distraint of property was being made, order to fire was given

and one man was killed and several were injured. In Chechna firing on a retreating crowd resulted in 6 persons being killed and 18 wounded. In Contai, a crowd watching preparation of salt was fired upon in June, 1930, and 25 persons were wounded. In Khersai, again, a crowd that gathered at the arrest of a person and would not disperse on warning, was fired upon with the result that eleven persons were killed. The celebration of the death anniversary of Deshbandhu Das was prohibited by the Police in Calcutta on the 22nd June, and, when the men in the procession were mercilessly beaten, the women who had come out of their seclusion flung themselves into the front in order to save the wounded from being trampled under horses' hoofs.

"The Police entered college buildings and belaboured the students sitting in class-rooms. In Barisal, 500 persons were injured in a *lathi*-charge on one day. In Tamluk, the Police were said to have set fire to the property of Satyagrahis and their sympathisers. Reports of indecent assaults were received from many quarters. In Gopinathpur, Congress volunteers were mercilessly beaten, and amongst those beaten there was a Mussalman boy. The villag became infuriated and arrested the Police, and afte locking them up in a local school, set fire to it. Two Congress volunteers broke the door open and rescued the Police from the flames at the risk of their own lives. On the 31st December, 1931, the anniversary of the passing of Independence resolution at Lahore, Subhas Babu while marching in a procession was severely beaten. He had returned from jail shortly before, after serving his term of a year for sedition. In Lahore the authorities were so nervous as to proscribe the picture of a Non-co-operation tree. A veiled Mussalman lady-picketer was arrested at Ludhiana. Siapa ( waiting at funerals ) was practised at the houses of those who would sell foreign

cloth. In Rawalpindi prisoners were prosecuted for refusing to take bad food. In Montgomery, one hunger-striker, Lala Lakhi Ram, died after many days of fasting. In Tam Tam a lady was roughly handled. The firing on the Governor of the Punjab at the Senate Hall gave the Police an opportunity to carry on indiscriminate searches. In Bihar the movement made a quiet progress. In Samastipur Sub-division, there is a small bazaar called Shahpur Patoria. Four days after the celebration of the Jawahar Week, 125 policemen under the leadership of the Superintendent of Police surrounded it, made 46 arrests, and took away the property of some of those who were not at their houses, in 12 bullock carts. Similar reports were received from other districts. Monghyr and Bhagalpur were in the forefront of the movement. Picketing of liquor shops caused a loss of 40 lacs to the Government. Military Police and Gurkhas were taken through the paddy fields of Phulwaria in Motihari, crushing the same, and overawing people round about by arresting numerous villagers. Non-payment of Chowkidari Tax was organised in Champaran, Saran, Muzaffarpur, Monghyr, Patna and Shahabad districts. In C. P. liquor bids went down by 60 per cent. At Amraoti, there was a *lathi*-charge for celebrating the Garhwali Day. In Andhra the worst achievement of the Police was the beating of about 80 friends that met at a picnic at Peddapur on 21st December, 1930. Serious injuries were inflicted upon the people including two or three ladies. In Kerala, toddy sales had gone down by 70 per cent. In Tamil Nadu, stoppage of toddy sales was the scene of firing and several *lathi*-charges. In Delhi, a Rai Saheb was the wine merchant who had attained notoriety by being responsible for the arrest of 80 ladies and hundreds of male volunteers."[39]

In Gujarat the exodus of the peasants, due to unbearable sufferings, was a historic event whose description

by Mr. Brailsford is given below:

"And then began one of the strangest migrations in history. One after another, acting with a unanimity of which only Indians with their tight caste organisations are capable, these villagers packed their belongings into their bullock carts and drove them across the border into Baroda. A few even burned the rich crop which they were too late to remove. I visited one of their camps. They have built temporary shelters with matting for walls and palm leaves on sacking for a roof. The rains are over; they will suffer no grave hardship till May. But they are crowded together with thir beloved cattle, and packed in the narrow space are all their household goods, the great jars in which they store their rice, cloths and churns, chests and beds, shining pots of brass, here a plough, there a picture of the gods, and everywhere, at intervals, the presiding genius of this camp, a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi. I asked a big group of them why they had left their homes, The women gave the promptest and simplest answer,—"Because Mahatmaji is in prison." The men were still conscious of an economic grievance; "farming does not pay, and the tax is unjust." One or two said "To win Swaraj" or Self-Government.

"I spent two memorable days touring the deserted villages in company with the Chairman of the Congress organisation of Surat. One passed row after row of the padlocked cottages, and through the bars of the windows one could see only empty rooms. The streets were silent lakes of sunlight. Nothing moved until a monkey swung himself over a roof.

"To some of these villages, however, a few of the men returned to woik in the fields, while their families and goods remained in Baroda. Some of them complained of the terrorism of the Police.

"It was not hard to believe, for I had seen something of their ways myself. As our car was leaving one of these abandoned villages, a policeman armed with rifle, with a fixed bayonet, ordered us to stop. We might leave the village, he said. only with written permit from the Police. The man collapsed promptly when he saw my European clothes and presently began babbling in broken English 'me nice policeman', but it interested me particularly to discover that nowhere on his uniform did he carry a number. When I demanded a number, he assured me that 'every man had a secret number.' He belonged to an emergency force which is carrying for itself reputation that unpleasantly resembles that of the Black and Tans in Ireland. It can hardly have been an oversight on the part of the organisers of this force, that their uniforms show no number.

"One cannot blame a Government confronted by open, if passive, rebellion, if it retaliates within the law. It has proclaimed Congress an illegal organisation. It has confiscated Congress 'Ashram' in the Bardoli district. It arrested my host the Chairman of Surat on the day after we parted. It attached the properties of the Bardoli refugees and will sell their fields to recover the tax, if it can find a purchaser, a risk which leaves the peasants calm.

"All this is within the rules of the game. Terrorism is outside them, and terrorism is being used. My notebook is full of the complaints of the peasants with whom we talked on this tour. I could seldom verify their stories, but I questioned them carefully, and do not doubt their word. These notes with names and dates shall go to the superior officials. One village was haunted every night by a gang of ruffians, who fired guns, tore veils, and on one occasion murdered an old peasant with an axe. When the villagers asked for protection, a high

Police official is said to have answered: 'You have it when you pay your tax.' Most of the complaints were of unprovoked beating by the Police with their formidable *lathis.*

"One scene I managed, after much questioning, to reconstruct. It happened in the abandoned village of Afwa. Here some peasants who own no land had remained behind, and with them were some who had returned from Baroda to cultivate their fields. On October 21st, about 3 a.m., a car arrived with ten policemen under a certain Sub-Inspector. The Police found these men sleeping in the fields. They beat them and then demanded the tax. They were then brought before this Sub-Inspector, who beat some of them with his own hands and kicked others. One was still limping and another showed a painful swelling. The heads of two brothers he knocked together. They were then taken in a lorry to the lock-up in Bardoli. There the Sub-Inspector threatened, with unprintable details, to 'make them useless to their wives.' That threat told and the younger brother, though not himself a landowner, paid the tax for his father's farm. In another case, a passer-by from another village was seized and beaten, and the money in his pocket picked. A receipt was given in the name of a local tax-payer, and the stranger was told to recover it from him. This Sub-Inspector was a person who combined ingenuity with brutality. Finding in the village another stranger, a man from Surat, he appropriated his gold ornaments and tried to force some of the villagers to buy,—a species of summary distraint. But I might continue this narrative indefinitely and still it would record only one morning of this officer's activity. I might have hesitated to believe these peasants, had I not happened to meet this person in the flesh, and caught him out in a ludicrous and palpable lie. By such hands, in brief, far from the heights of

Simla and the security of Whitehall, is law and order dispensed to the 'silent millions."[40]

In Borsad, the women were dispersed by force and the specific allegation was made that, when the ladies were thrown down, the policemen trod upon their chests with boots.[41] It may be added that in addition to the brutal assaults on the body the Police sometimes resorted to wanton destruction of property. Paddy fields were burnt and eatables forcibly taken. A vegetable market in Gujarat was raided because the dealers refused to sell vegetables to the officials.

The climax was reached when most brutal and cowardly assaults were made on helpless prisoners in jails. Subhas Bose refers to an attack made in the Alipore Central Jail at Calcutta in April, 1930, on a number of distinguished persons including himself. Bose, who was in the front rank was thrown down and remained unconscious for more than an hour. The Government refused the demand for a public inquiry but appointed a Medical Board who examined the injured persons and issued a report.[42]

The brutalities of the police reached a climax in suppressing salt raids at Dharasana (150 miles from Bombay), Wadala (a suburb of Bombay), and other places. "A mass raid at Dharasana took place on the 21st day of May, when 2,500 volunteers from all parts of Gujarat took part in it. They were led by Imam Shaheb, the 62 year old colleague of Gandhiji in South Africa. The volunteers commenced the raid early in the morning and as they attacked the salt heaps at different places the Police charged them with *lathis* (bamboo sticks) and beat them back.

"Thousands witnessed the spectacle. After this had gone on for two hours, the leaders, Messrs. Imam Saheb, Pyarelal and Manilal Gandhi were arrested, and later

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu also, The total number of injured volunteers on that day was 290." Two of the injured died from the effect of their injuries.

"Mr. Hussain, ex-Judge, Small Causes Court, Bombay, Mr. K. Natarajan, and Mr. G. K. Devadhar, President, Servants of India Society, who personally watched the Dharasana raid, issued a statement in which they said: "They saw with their own eyes that after Satyagrahis were driven out of the Salt boundary, mounted European Sowars rode at the full gallop with *lāthis* in their hands beating people between the spot where Satyagrahis had reached for raid and the village itself. They actually galloped full speed through the streets of the village, scattering men, women and children. Villagers ran into bye-lanes and closed themselves in houses. But if by accident, they were unable to escape, they were beaten with *lathis*." "A succession of raids were also made on the Wadala Salt Depot. On the 22nd, 188 volunteers were arrested and taken to Worli. On the 25th, 100 volunteers were accompanied by a huge crowd of 2,000 spectators. The Police charged them with *lathis* injuring 17, and later arrested 115. The rest with the crowd got off with the salt. On the 26th afternoon 65 volunteers were afield and 43 of them were arrested, when 18 more were injured. The rest with the crowd got off with salt."

"But the most demonstrative raid was to come off on the 1st June for which the War Council was diligently preparing . In the morning of the 1st nearly 15,000 volunteers and non-volunteers participated in the great mass action at Wadala.

"Successive batches marched up to the Port Trust level-crossing and the swelled crowd were held up there by the Police cordon. Soon the raiders, among whom were women and children, broke through the cordon, splashed through slime and mud, and ran over the pans.

Congress raiders numbering about 150 were slightly injured. The raiders were repulsed by the Police who were acting under the immediate supervision of the Home Member.

"Serious troubles ending in two Police charges and the calling out of the Military to cope with the situation occurred at the Worli Detention Camp on the 3rd June, when about four thousand undertrial Wadala 'Raiders' were involved in a brush with the Police, resulting in about ninety casualties. twenty-five of them being serious".[43]

Lest it be supposed that the Indian accounts are too incredible to be true, reference may be made to the testimony of an English lady, Miss Madeleine Slade, a disciple of Gandhi. "She paid a visit to Bulsar in Gujarat on June 6, 1930, to see with her own eyes how the *Satyagrahi* volunteers, engaged in the non-violent raid on the Dharasana Salt Depot, were being treated by the Police. In a report published in the *Young India* of June 12, 1930, she stated that she had found evidence of the following injuries perpetrated on *Satyagrahi* volunteers. :

1. *Lathi* blows on head, chest, stomach and joints.
2. Thrusts with *lathis* in private parts, abdominal regions.
3. Stripping of men naked before beating.
4. Tearing off loin cloths and thrusting of sticks into anus.
5. Pressing and sqeezing of the testicles till a man becomes unconscious.
6. Dragging of wounded men by legs and arms, after beating them the while.
7. Throwing of wounded men into thorn hedges or into salt water.
8. Riding of horses over men as they lie or sit on the ground.

9. Thrusting of pins and thorns into men's bodies, sometimes even when they are unconscious.

10. Beating of men after they have become unconscious and other vile things too many to relate, besides foul language and blasphemy, calculated to hurt as much as possible the most sacred feeling of the Satyagrahis."[44]

Several other European eye-witnesses have left graphic accunt of the brutality prepetrated by the Government agents in the name of law and order. One of the most notable among them is Verrier Elwin, an Anglo-Catholic Missionary who was formerly an Oxford Don. He personally witnessed many incidents in the *Satyagraha* campaign and left a short account of them. The brutal treatment of the *Satyagrahi* in Bombay in April, 1930, is described by him in detail. He has also given an admirable sketch of the No-tax campaign in Gujarat in the form of a Report entitled *In the Desolate Villages of Gujarat*.

A European had written an article on the Indian situation and sent it to six papers in America, England, France, Norway, Germany, and Italy. But no one would publish it. The mystery was solved when the editor of an Italian paper said that he had received instructions from his Government to publish no anti-British article on the Indian question. It was gathered that similar instructions were issued in America.[45]

## III. THE EPIC STRUGGLE AT DHARASANA, AND OTHER EVENTS.

Fortunately for the historians, a detailed account of the heroic non-violent fight put up by the salt-raiders at Dharasana has been preserved by Webb Miller, Foreign correspondent of the United Press, U. S. A., who was an eye-witness of the grim tragedy. His description has an epic grandeur about it, and will go down in history as the finest literary memorial of the martyrs of Civil Disobe-

dience movement launched by Gandhi in 1930. On May 20, 1930, Mr. Miller heard reports of the demonstration of the volunteers near Dharasana, but the Government took steps to prevent persons coming to, and news going out of, the place. Telegraphic messages to Mrs. Naidu were withheld, and Miller was forcibly detrained at Bulsar, so that he may not reach Dhingri, the Railway station nearest to Dharasana. Miller, however, managed to reach Dhingri by a goods train and then walked six miles to Dharasana. He found there 2500 Congressmen accommodated in several thatched sheds. The events of the 21st May, 1930, may be narrated in his own words :

"Mme. Naidu called for prayer before the march started and the entire assemblage knelt. She exhorted them : 'Gandhi's body is in jail but his soul is with you. India's prestige is in your hands, you must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten but you must not resist; you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows.' Wild, shrill cheers terminated her speech.

"Slowly and in silence the throng commenced the half-mile march to salt-deposits. A few carried ropes for lassoing the barbed-wire stockade around the salt pans. About a score who were assigned to act as stretcher-bearers wore crude, hand-painted red crosses pinned to their breasts, their stretchers consisted of blankets. Manilal Gandhi, second son of Gandhi, walked among the foremost of the marchers. As the throng drew near the salt pans they commenced chanting the revolutionary slogan, "Inquilab Zindabad", intoning the two words over and over.

"The salt-deposits were surrounded by ditches filled with water and guarded by four hundred native Surat Police in Khaki Shorts and brown turbans. Half a dozen British officials commanded them. The Police

carried *lathis*—five foot clubs tipped with steel. Inside the stockade twenty-five rifle-men were drawn up.

"In complete silence the Gandhi men drew up and halted a hundred yards from the stockade. A picked column advanced from the crowd, waded the ditches, and approached the barbed-wire stockade, which the Surat Police surrounded, holding clubs at the ready. Police officials ordered the marchers to disperse under a recently imposed regulation which prohibited gathering of more than five persons in any one place. The column silently ignored the warning and slowly walked forward. I stayed with the main body about a hundred yards from the stockade.

"Suddenly, at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod *lathis*. Not one of the marchers raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten-pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.

Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. When everyone of the first column had been knocked down, stretcher-bearers rushed up unmolested by the Police and carried off the injured to a thatched hut which had been arranged as a temporary hospital.

"Then another column formed while the leaders pleaded with them to retain their self-control. They marched slowly towards the police. Although everyone knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down,

perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. They marched steadily with heads up, without the encouragement of music or cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle ; the marchers simply walked forward until struck down. There were no outcries, only groans after they fell. There were not enough stretcher-bearers to carry off the wounded ; I saw eighteen injured being carried off simultaneously, while forty-two still lay bleeding on the ground awaiting stretcher-bearers. The blankets used as stretchers were sodden with blood.

"At times the spectacle of unresisting men being methodically bashed into a bloody pulp sickened me so much that I had to turn away. The western mind finds it difficult to grasp the idea of non-resistance. I felt an indefinable sense of helpless rage and loathing, almost as much against the men who were submitting unresistingly to being beaten as against the police wielding the clubs, and this despite the fact that when I came to India I sympathised with the Gandhi cause.

"Several times the leaders nearly lost control of the waiting crowd. They rushed up and down, frantically pleading with and exhorting the intensely excited men to remember Gandhi's instructions. It seemed that the unarmed throng was on the verge of launching a mass attack upon the police. The British official in charge, Superintendent Robinson of Surat, sensed the imminence of an outbreak and posted his twenty-five rifle-men on a little knoll ready to fire. He came to me, inquired my identity, and said : "You'd better move aside out of the line of shooting. We may be forced to open fire into the crowd." While we were talking one of the Gandhiites, a young university student, ran up to Robinson, his face

contorted by rage, tore open his cotton smock, exposing his bare breast, and shrieked, "Shoot me, shoot me, kill me, it's for my country." The leaders managed to calm the crowd. The Gandhi men altered their tactics, marched up in groups of twenty-five and sat on the ground near the salt pans, making no effort to draw nearer. Led by a cofee-colored Parsi sergeant of Police, named Antia, a hulking, ugly-looking fellow, detachments of police approached one seated group and called upon them to disperse under the assemblage ordinance. The Gandhi followers ignored them and refused even to glance up at the *lathis* brandished threateningly above their heads. Upon a word from Antia the beating recommenced coldly, without anger. Bodies toppled over in threes and fours, bleeding from great gashes on their scalps. Group after group walked forward, sat down, and submitted to being beaten into insensibility, without raising an arm to fend off the blows.

"Finally the police became enraged by the non-resistance, sharing, I suppose, the helpless rage I had already felt at the demonstrators for not fighting back. They commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and testicles. The injured men writhed and squealed in agony, which seemed to inflame the fury of the police, and the crowd again almost broke away from their leaders. The police then began dragging the sitting men by the arms or feet, sometimes for a hundred yards, and throwing them into ditches. One was dragged to the ditch where I stood; the splash of his body doused me with muddy water. Another policeman dragged a Gandhi man to the ditch, threw him in, then belabored him over the head with his *lathi*. Hour after hour stretcher-bearers carried back a stream of inert, bleeding bodies.

"I went to see Mme, Naidu, who was directing the sub-leaders in keeping the crowds from charging the police.

While we were talking, one of the British officials approached her, touched her on the arm, and said : "Sarojini Naidu, you are under arrest." She haughtily shook off his hand and said : "I'll come, but don't touch me." The crowd cheered frantically as she strode with the British officer across the open space to the barbed-wire stockade, where she was interned. Later she was sentenced to prison. Manilal Gandhi was also arrested.

"In the middle of the morning V. J. Patel arrived... Patel said : 'All hope of reconciling India with the British Empire is lost for ever. I can understand any Government's taking people into custody and punishing them for breaches of the law, but I cannot understand how any Government that calls itself civilized could deal as savagely and brutally with non-violent, unresisting men, as the British have this morning.'

"By eleven the heat reached 116 in the shade and the activities of the Gandhi volunteers subsided. I went back to the temporary hospital to examine the wounded. They lay in rows on the bare ground in the shade of an open, palm-thatched shed. I counted 320 injured, many still insensible with fractured skulls, others writhing in agony from kicks in the testicles and stomach. The Gandhi men had been able to gather only a few native doctors, who were doing the best they could with the inadequate facilities. Scores of the injured had received no treatment for hours and two had died. The demonstration was finished for the day on account of the heat.

"I was the only foreign correspondent who had witnessed the amazing scene—a classic example of "*Satyagraha*" or non-violent civil disobedience. My problem now was to get the story out to the world".[46]

How this problem was solved may be briefly described as it throws interesting light on the methods pursued by the Government. Miller sent five messages

of 100 words each to London from Bulsar. Three of them and about a half of the fourth reached London office —but the office was requested to cancel them as they had been transmitted "by error". London office refused to cancel them.

Arriving at Bombay, Miller sent a telegraph of 2,000 words but it was withheld. After interviewing various officials he was told by the Secretary for Ecclesiastical Affairs : "Your messages must have gone. The Government is not interfering in any way with the messages of foreign correspondents." Miller said : "I know my message has not been sent. Unless it be released immediately I am going to fly to Persia and send them from there ......If the newspaper readers of the world learn that the Government ( of India ) is censoring or killing messages they won't believe a word of British officials' statements thereafter." The Secretary for Ecclesiastical Affairs now admitted that he had been assigned to act as a censor. After a quarrel for an hour the Secretary agreed to pass the whole story except three points concerning the actions of the Police. The sequel may be told in Mr. Miller's own words ;

"The remaining material was air-mailed and it reached London and New York about ten days after, along with the story of my troubles with the censorship. My story of the beatings at Dharâsana caused a sensation when it appeared in the 1,350 newspapers served by the United Press throughout the World. Senator Blaine read the text of my story into the records of the United States Senate. Representatives of the Gandhi Movement in the U. S. A. printed it as a leaflet and distributed more than a quarter of a million copies."[47]

Reference may now be made to a few other incidents, reported by Miller, both violent and non-violent in character :

'Six days after Dharasana beatings, Bombay

mobs attacked the Police Stations in the Bhendi Bazar quarter —a crowd of several thousand natives surrounded Sandhurst Road Police barracks. The crowd showered 'rocks the size of a fist' and smashed the windows. Half a dozen police rushed out and opened fire with revolvers point-blank into the streaming mob......the British sergeants stood and fired methodically into the mass of human beings. With shrieks of rage and yells of agony the mob quickly broke and scattered in all directions. We could see people falling as they ran and the street for a couple of blocks was spattered with blood. Twelve British Police sergeants were more or less badly wounded during the fracas. We learnt afterwards that about eight natives had been killed and eighty wounded in the firing. Attempts were made by the mob to set fire—but it was quickly extinguished.

'The Bhendibazar riot had nothing to do with Gandhi movements. A Pathan kicked a dog belonging to a British Police sergeant who then tried to catch the Pathan. A crowd quickly gathered and attempted to beat the sergeant who opened fire to save himself. News of the incident spread and mobs rushed to attack the Police station, They were Mahomedans who held aloof from Gandhi Campaign and hence the British regarded it as serious.'[48]

Within a few days there was a Procession of more than 100,000 people as a protest against Gandhi's arrest. Just opposite the Victoria Terminus Railway Station Police blocked the street. The Procession sat down in the street. "One frenzied Gandhiite rushed in front of the Police, shouting repeatedly, 'Shoot me in the breast." One Gandhi man shouted to the demonstrators, "If you are prepared to die, stay, if not, go home" ; but none left. After four hours, at 8 P.M., the authorities allowed the Procession to proceed into the heart of European Quarters. "This triumph of non-violence over armed force", says Miller, "gave

Gandhi's idea of non-resistance its first spectacular victory.

But non-violence could not always be maintained. At Wadala in the suburbs of Bombay about one hundred Congress volunteers, leading a mob of about 40,000, made a mass attack on the salt works. It lasted three hours. Gandhi's instructions of non-violence were ignored. Time after time the mob broke through police cordons, invaded the saltpans, and carried away salt. The Police belaboured the mob with clubs while the mob showered the British Police with large stones. In the course of two such demonstrations Miller witnessed 1,000 arrests. Several hundred suffered injuries.[49]

## C. ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

While the whole of India was being convulsed by the stirring events described above, the Simon Commission proceeded with its work and its Report was issued on 7 June, 1930. Its chief recommendations were :

1. Federal Constitution for India.
2. Full autonomy in the Provinces subject to the overriding powers vested in the Governor.
3. Enlargement of the Provincial Legislative Councils.
4. The Lower House of the Central Legislature to be enlarged and elected by the Provincial Councils; but no Responsible Government in the Centre.
5. Separation of Burma from India.

The recommendations were so unsatisfactory that the Indian Legislative Assembly, though without any nationalist member of the Congress, rejected it *in toto*. Even the Liberal Party demanded that it must not form the basis of discussion at the Round Table Conference. The Congress leaders, then in jail, were permitted to confer together, and issued a joint statement on 15 August, 1930, that no solution would be acceptable to them or to the Congress which did not guarantee the following :

1. India's right to secede from the Empire.

2. A national Government responsible to the people including control of defence and finance.

3. India's right to submit to an impartial tribunal all British claims and concessions given to the Britishers in the past.

## I. THE FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The British Government paid no heed to the protest of the Congress. In accordance with the Viceroy's declaration of 31 October, 1929,[49a] there was a Conference of the representatives of His Majesty's Government and those of India...This, the First Round Table Conference, was inaugurated by His Majesty the King Emperor in London on 12 November, 1930. The session continued till 19 January, 1931, under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. The Conference was attended by 89 members—16 from the British Parties, 16 from the Indian States, and 57 from British India.

The Congress was not represented in the Conference, but it was attended by several eminent leaders like Sapru, Jinnah, and Muhammad Ali, representing all other important political groups in India. There was a general agreement among Indian members that British India and the Indian Native States should form a Federal Union ruled by Parliamentary system of Government. The British members, however, opposed the immediate grant of Dominion Status and the introduction of British Parliamentary system in India.

When, after the general debate, the Conference proceeded to discuss the framework of the constitution, the ruling princes agreed to "consider an immediate federation on two conditions. British India must be federalised, and the Central Government must cease to be a purely official Government and become in some degree responsible to the Central Legislature. 'We can only federate', said the Nawab of Bhopal, 'with a self-governing and

federal British India.' The other Indian members and the British delegates agreed to this and the main principle having thus been settled a number of sub-committees were appointed to work the details.[50]

The Federal Structure sub-committee, with the Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, as the Chairman, submitted its final report on 15 January, 1931. Its main recommendations were :

Executive authority should be exercised, in accordance with Dominion precedent, by the Governor-General as representing the Crown, advised by a Council of Ministers. The Governor-General should be instructed to invite one Minister to form a Government which would be collectively responsible to the Legislature. There was 'general agreement' that the assumption by India of all the powers and responsibility which have hitherto rested on Parliament cannot be made at one step and that during a period of transition the Governor-General shall be responsible for defence and external relations.

The main trouble was in connection with the election of members belonging to minority communities.

A new complication was added by the demand of B. R. Ambedkar that for electoral purposes the Depressed Classes should be treated as a separate community. These and the other Minorities all favoured separate electorates with weightage.

Both Sapru and Jayakar expressed the hope that the communities would settle their differences if they were given the chance of working together side by side for their one country.

It seems that the Labour Government took a similar stand and there was a chance of communal settlement. But Sir Fazl-i-Husain, then a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, pulled the strings from India and the attempts of the Labour Government were foiled. The

following note from the diary of Sir Fazl-i-Husain, dated December 3, 1930 ( recorded in his biography by his son, Azim Hussain ) is revealing :

"News from Round Table Conference indicates that Labour Government made attempts to make Moslems agree to some sort of joint electorates. Shafi, Bhopal, Sultan Ahmed, Fazl-ul-Huq, Hidayatullah were ready for the game, but others were against it. Mahommed Ali was also helping, and no doubt Jinnah, too, though himself remaining in the background. I had to take strong action, and the situation has just been saved. We must keep our present weightage in six Provinces and Centre and have majority in Bengal and the Punjab through separate electorates. Let Hindus non-co-operate, and let us build up sufficient strength during the next ten years."[51]

How the "situation was saved' we do not yet know. But henceforth the Muslims, of all shades of opinion, insisted that the Muslim claims must be met and that was a condition precedent for their support to the demand for Dominion Status. Sir Muhammad Shafi, M. A. Jinnah, Fazlul Huq, and Dr. Shafaat Ahmed Khan,—all spoke in the same strain. The last-named, perhaps the most liberal-minded of them all, observed : "We have never tried to create an Ulster in India ; that has never been ......our wish. On the contrary, we have said that we will fight shoulder to shoulder with our brethren for the cause of India, our common Motherland. But we have at the same time made it perfectly clear......that our safeguards, our rights, the rights for which we have been fighting for years, must be preserved and guaranteed."[52]

But the 'most unkindest cut of all' came from the whilom nationalist leader, Muhammad Ali, a devoted follower and 'dear brother' of Gandhi. 'Make no mistake about the quarrels between Hindu and Mussalman,' said he,

'they are founded only on the fear of domination.' And he reminded the Conference that Islam was not confined to India. "I belong to two circles of equal size but which are not concentric. One is India and the other is the Muslim world.......We are not nationalists but supernationalists."[53]

Before the Conference closed the Muslim delegation as a whole made a formal statement to the effect that "no advance is possible or practicable, whether in the Provinces or in the Central Government, without adequate safeguards for the Muslims of India, and that no constitution will be acceptable to the Muslims of India without such safeguards."[54]

The agreement on Dominion Status and all-India Federation was hailed with joy and the speck of cloud in the distant horizon in the shape of the unsolved Minority Problem did not mar the hilarity of the proceedings.

In his concluding speech on 19 January, 1931, the Prime Minister defined the policy of His Majesty's Government as follows :-

(a). "The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights."

(b). "His Majesty's Government has taken note of the fact that the deliberations of the Conference have proceeded on the basis, accepted by all parties, that the Central Government should be a Federation of All-India, embracing both the Indian States and British India in a bi-cameral legislature".

(c). "With a Legislature constituted on a Federal basis, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to recognise the principle of the responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature."

(d). "Under existing conditions the subjects of Defence and External Affairs will be reserved to the Governor-General, and arrangements will be made to place in his hands the powers necessary for the administration of those subjects. Moreover, as the Governor-General must, as a last resort, be able in an emergency to maintain the tranquillity of the State, and must similarly be responsible for the observance of the constitutional rights of minorities, he must be granted the necessary powers for these purposes."

(e). "The Governors' Provinces will be constituted on a basis of full responsibility. Their Ministries will be taken from the Legislature and will be jointly responsible to it. The range of Provincial subjects will be so defined as to give them the greatest possible measure of self-government. The authority of the Federal Government will be limited to provisions required to secure its administration of Federal Subjects, and so discharge its responsibility for subjects defined in the constitution as of all-India concern."[55]

'In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India to full responsibility for her own government.' Finally the hope was expressed that 'those engaged at present in civil disobedience might respond to the Viceroy's appeal and take their part in the co-operative work that lay ahead.'[56]

## II. GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

The Round Table Conference was adjourned *sine*

*die* on 19 January, 1931. The policy outlined by the Prime Minister undoubtedly marked a considerable advance over the recommendations of the Simon Commission. This was emphasized in a manifesto issued, on the 6th of February, 1931, by the 26 delegates who had returned to India from the Round Table Conference. It was stated in this manifesto that British opinion had undergone a remarkable change in India's favour and that it had been explicitly recognised that the task of governing India should be entrusted to an Indian Executive responsible to the Indian Legislature."[57] There can be no reasonable doubt that this change was largely due to the strong attitude taken by the Indian National Congress and the recent demonstration of its hold over the country. But it was equally clear that everything depended upon the attitude of the Congress. It alone could deliver the goods and thus determine whether the new British policy would bring peace in India and carry her constitutional progress one stage further. The reaction of the Congress was swift and sharp. Two days after the conclusion of the First R.T.C., on 21 January, the Working Committee of the Congress met at Allahabad and passed a resolution on the Round Table Conference to the following effect :

'The Committee repudiated the representative character of the Conference and considered the declaration of the policy of the British Government made by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister of England, on behalf of the Cabinet on the 19th January, 1931', "and is of opinion that it is too vague and general to justify any change in the policy of the Congress.

"While adhering to the resolution of Independence passed at the Lahore Congress, this Committee endorses the view taken by Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others in their letter

of the 15th August, 1930, from the Yeravda Central Prison and is unable to see in the pronouncement of the policy made by the Premier an adequate response to the position taken by the signatories to the said letter. The Committee considers that in the absence of such response, and while thousands of men and women including almost all the original members of the Working Committee and a great majority of the members of the All-India Congress Committee are locked in jail, and while the Government repression is in full swing, no general enunciation of policy can be helpful in bringing to a satisfactory issue the struggle which the Nation has entered upon or justifying the suspension of Civil Disobedience. The Committee can, therefore, only advise the country to carry on the struggle with unabated vigour along the lines already laid down and trusts that it will maintain the high spirit it has shown so far."[58]

The day after the resolution was passed a cablegram was received from Dr. Sapru and Mr. Sastri who attended the Round Table Conference at London, asking the Working Committee "not to arrive at any decision on the Premier's speech, until their arrival and without hearing them." Accordingly the resolution was not published, but, as happens in all such cases, information found its way to Government right enough and almost immediately after it had been passed.

Evidently as a reaction to the resolution, the Government of India released, on 26 January, 1931, the members of the Working Committee in order to afford them an opportunity to meet together and discuss the political situation.

On February 6, 1931, 26 members of the Round Table Conference, immediately after landing in India, sent an appeal to the Congress requesting its leaders "to come forward to make solid contribution to the completion

of the scheme" which was outlined in the Conference. Dr. Sapru and Sastri met the Working Committee at Allahabad on February 13, and held long discussions with the members. Gandhi wrote a letter to Lord Irwin drawing his attention to the Police excesses and particularly to the assault on women at Borsad, and asking for an inquiry. His request was turned down and the prospects of a negotiation with the Government appeared to be very gloomy. At this juncture it was suggested that Gandhi might ask for an interview with the Viceroy instead of carrying on correspondence. Gandhi agreed and wrote to the Viceroy on February 14, 1931. The reply came by telegram on the 16th and Gandhi left for Delhi on the same day. The Working Committee had formally passed a resolution investing Gandhi with powers to negotiate a settlement in the name of the Congress, but nevertheless a few days later all the members proceeded to Delhi at the summons of Gandhi.

Gandhi saw the Viceroy for the first time on February 17, and the conversations dragged on from day to day. Gandhi kept the members of the Working Committee fully informed of what was happening day after day. At last, after a protracted negotiation, terms of settlement were drafted and Gandhi returned from the Viceregal Lodge at 2-30 A.M. on 5 March to place it before the expectant members of the Working Committee who had kept a whole night vigil. Gandhi put every item of the settlement to each individual member of the Working Committee and asked whether he should reject the settlement as a whole or on any particular item. He made it quite clear that he would not proceed further without the unanimous support of his colleagues. It seems that Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and many other members did not fully approve of the draft on one point or another. But they all ultimately gave in and unanimously approved of it.

The Pact was signed by the Viceroy and Gandhi on 5 March, 1931. The first three paras of the Agreement ran as follows :

"(1) Consequent on the conversations that have taken place between His Excellency the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi, it has been arranged that the Civil Disobedience movement be discontinued, and that, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, certain action be taken by the Government of India and Local Governments.

"(2). As regards constitutional questions, the scope of future discussion is stated, with the assent of His Majesty's Government, to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined, Federation is an essential part ; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards, in the interests of India, for such matters, as for instance, defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations.

"(3). In pursuance of the statement made by the Prime Minister in his announcement of the 19th of January, 1931, steps will be taken for the participation of the representatives of the Congress in the future discussions that are to take place on the scheme of constitutional reform."[59]

The rest of the Pact, which was a very lengthy document, contained details of the ways in which the Government agreed to undo the injuries suffered by individuals during the Civil Disobedience movement.

Whatever might have been said to the contrary by Gandhi, the second clause of the agreement meant an abandonment by the Congress of its demand for *Purna Swaraj* or full independence.

This all-important clause, which practically gave

away the whole Congress case, was agreed to by Gandhi without the knowledge, not to speak of the previous approval, of the members of the Working Committee in Delhi, although they were being kept informed of the progress of the negotiations from day to day. Its reaction on Jawaharlal Nehru is described by himself as follows :

"On the night of the fourth of March we waited till midnight for Gandhi's return from the Viceroy's house. He came back about two A.M., and we were awakened and told that an agreement had been reached. We saw the draft. I knew most of the clauses, for they had been often discussed, but, at the very top, Clause 2, with its reference to safeguards, etc. gave me a tremendous shock. I was wholly unprepared for it. I said nothing then, and we all retired......

"The question of our objective, of independence, also remained. I saw in that clause 2 of the settlement that even this seemed to be jeopardised. Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this? The independence resolution of the Congress, the pledge of January 26, so often repeated? So I lay and pondered on that March night, and in my heart there was a great emptiness as of something precious gone, almost beyond recall."

Next morning Gandhi had a long talk with Nehru and gave his own interpretation of Clause 2. Nehru continues: "The interpretation seemed to me to be a forced one, and I was not convinced, but I was somewhat soothed by his talk. The merits of the agreement apart, I told him that his way of springing surprises upon us frightened me, there was something unknown about him which, in spite of the closest association for fourteen years, I could not understand at all and which filled me

with apprehension. He admitted the presence of this unknown in him, and said that he himself could not answer for it or foretell what it might lead to.

"For a day or two I wobbled, not knowing what to do. There was no question of opposing or preventing that agreement then......

"So I decided, not without great mental conflict and physical distress, to accept the agreement and work for it wholeheartedly. There appeared to me to be no middle way."[60]

It will be clear to any unprejudiced mind, as it was to Nehru, that the Congress not only gave up the demand for Independence or Dominion Status, but definitely and substantially receded from the position they had taken up at the Conference with the Viceroy on December 23, 1929, which led to the rejection of the Round Table Conference and precipitated the Civil Disobedience movement, as well as in subsequent negotiations during the movement. The Working Committee also definitely went back upon its own resolution of January 21, 1931, which repudiated the representative character of the Round Table Conference and regarded the declaration of policy made by the British Premier at the Round Table Conference as too vague and general to justify any change in the policy of the Congress. For the Committee now agreed to consider the scheme outlined in the Conference on the basis of the principle announced by the British Premier. It must be evident to all, not blinded by devotion to Gandhi, that what he secured for India, by way of constitutional progress, could be easily had without the Civil Disobedience campaign involving untold miseries and sufferings, but it was deliberately spurned again and again. Gandhi even went so far as to forego his demand for an investigation into the allegations of the police atrocities in different part of

India. It is true that on this particular occasion the credit or discredit must be, technically speaking, shared by the Working Committee which endorsed the Pact. But it must be remembered that Gandhi himself took good care to ensure that all men of independent thinking were excluded from this Committee so that all the members would be completely of one mind, that is, of his mind.

It may be said, without much exaggeration, that no member of the Working Committee, with the single exception of Jawaharlal Nehru, had ever thought of deviating a hair's breadth from Gandhi's opinion. But even Jawaharlal had, of late, been rapidly veering round to this group of devotees.[61] His line of thinking on the present issue has been hinted above. In order to clarify his position he issued a statement 'that he did not approve of some of the terms of the Pact, but as an obedient soldier he had to submit to the leader.' At that very moment he, not Gandhi, was the President of the Indian National Congress.

The Pact caused a great disappointment to many, particularly to Subhas Bose who held aloft the flag of Independent India, and though driven from the inner Circle of the Congress, had been rallying the country round this banner. His followers, particularly the Youth Organisations, openly expressed their dissatisfaction. Subhas saw Gandhi and argued with him, but could not change his views.

A large section, however, regarded the Pact as a great victory for Gandhi and the Congress. Gandhi himself issued a statement to the effect that 'the settlement did not imply a victory for either party'. This is the least he could do if we bear in mind that on the eve of his march to Dandi he had publicly stated : "Civil Disobedience, begun this time, cannot be stopped and must not he stopped so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive."[62]

It is a moot point to decide why Gandhi made such

a *volte face*. The only rational justification that can be urged is a realization on his part that in this unequal fight with the Government the chances of success were very remote, and a compromise in good time is preferable to an admission of failure and voluntary retreat.

But whatever might have been the real ground for Gandhi's ignoble retreat, the Pact should not be judged merely by what it accomplished or failed to achieve. There is one aspect of it which, though generally ignored at the time in India, cannot but appeal to the historian as a valuable gain in a long view of things. For the first time in the history of British India, the British Government condescended to treat the Indian National Congress on a footing of equality as a political opponent, and entered on a prolonged negotiation with its accredited agent to settle terms of peace. The very fact that the Viceroy and Gandhi put their respective signatures on a 'treaty of peace' put the Indian National Congress on a high pedestal, and increased its prestige and stature. What was more important, the British practically conceded to the Congress a status and authority to speak for political India and consciously or unconsciously admitted its right to be heard on all future negotiations. This was no small gain and British statesmen like Churchill fully realized that they had yielded grounds and the British prestige suffered a set-back. The very fact that Gandhi, the half-naked *fakir*—to use Churchill's expression—ascended the staircase of Viceregal lodge, day after day, to carry on diplomatic negotiations on behalf of the Congress, made it patent to all that henceforth the British authority in India must take due cognizance of the great national organization which was fighting for India's freedom. Whether, and if so, how far, this aspect of the question weighed with Gandhi, no one can say.

In spite of its failure to achieve the goal the Civil

passed by the Bengal Provincial Conference in respect of Gopinath Saha, and Gandhi was overwhelmed with sorrow when C.R. Das challenged him on this point and was defeated by only a narrow majority in a meeting of the AICC.[66]

But the execution of Bhagat Singh was not the only shadow under which the Congress met. While the Congress was actually in session, a serious Hindu-Muslim riot broke out in Kanpur. The immediate cause was the refusal of the Muslims to close their shops when a *hartal* was declared after the execution of Bhagat Singh on 23 March. This was evidently in retaliation for the refusal of the Hindus to join the *hartal* organized by the Muslims after the death of Muhammad Ali shortly before. The following is the official account of the Congress which passed a resolution and appointed a Committee of Inquiry on the riot. "On the 24th March, began the plunder ot Hindu shops. Even on the night of the 23rd March, some fifty were wounded. On the 25th, there was a blaze. Shops and temples were set fire to and burnt to cinders. The Police did not render any assistance ; disorder, arson, loot, murder, spread like fire. Five hundred families abandoned their houses and took shelter in villages. Dr. Ramachandra was one of the worst sufferers. All the members of his family, including his wife and aged parents, were killed and their bodies were thrust into gutters. According to the official estimates, 165 were killed and 480 were injured". The most tragic incident was the cold-blooded murder of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, President U. P., P. C. C. and a great national worker. He had saved many Muslim families that very day, and in course of doing his duty was decoyed and cut down by a furious mob of Muslims.[67]

The Committee of Inquiry that was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. Bhagavandas submitted

its report in a bulky volume. It began with a long historical introduction with the sole object to prove that the Muslim rulers in India were the most tolerant in respect of other religions. A more ridiculous parody of history it is difficult to imagine, and yet it bore the signature of several Hindus who should have known better. It was a piece of pure political propaganda, and was printed at great expense by the Working Committee of the Congress. Fortunately for the good name of the Congress, and of the authors of the Report, it was proscribed by the Government and did not see the light of the day.

Shortly after the end of the Congress session at Karachi, the new Working Committee met on April 1 and 2 to decide, among other things, the representation of the Congress at the Round Table Conference. Most of the members were of the opinion that the deputation should consist of about 15 members, and the Government were quite willing to accommodate up to 20. But ultimately it was decided unanimously that Gandhi should be the sole representative. This decision appeared to many to be a very unwise one. The official history of the Congress has been at pains to justify it on various grounds. First, that Gandhi was going to London, not to hammer out the details of a constitution but to negotiate the fundamentals of a treaty. Secondly, it signified unity of leadership in negotiating peace. Thirdly, the representation of Congress by a humanitarian like Gandhi "was in itself an achievement in the domain of the moral world."[68] Now all these ends could be achieved by sending a select team under the leadership of Gandhi, and such a course would have removed the great disadvantages under which Gandhi had to carry on a lonely fight against scores of non-descripts passing as representatives of India. A band of able men, including nationalist Muslims like Dr.

Ansari, would have given a far more realistic impression of Congress position and strength to the Englishmen, generally unaware of the inwardness of Indian politics. As it was bound to happen, Gandhi's voice was merely a lonely cry in the wilderness. The British public, and perhaps even many British members of the Conference, could not properly appreciate the true position and importance of the Congress *vis-à-vis* the other political organizations represented in the Conference, and the communalists seemed to convey, as it was deliberately designed by the Government to do so, a hopeless picture of divided India. Besides, Gandhi's humanitarianism was a very poor substitute for his singular ineptitude for diplomatic negotiations in the R.T.C., which was sumnoned to devise a constitution for India and not to establish peace and goodwill among mankind.

The execution of Bhagat Singh and the Kanpur communal riots augured ill for the success of the Round Table Conference. The foımer showed that the official intransigence had not abated a bit and there was no change of heart, which alone could ensure a smooth working of the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement. The Kanpur riot demonstrated the acuteness of the tension between the two communities whose unity and agreement were regarded as a *sine qua non* for the successful formulation of a constitutional scheme in the Conference.

Gandhi's mind was perturbed by both these issues. He strongly felt that he would rather not go to the R. T. Conference if he could not carry a Hindu-Muslim agreement in his hand. Nevertheless, the Working Committee met on the 9th, 10th and 11th of June, 1931, in Bombay, and at the instance of Muslim friends, and much against the inclinations of Gandhi, passed a resolution to the effect that even if efforts for communal agreement failed, Mahatma Gandhi should represent the Congress at

the Round Table Conference for the presentation of the Congress position.[69]

This short official account may be considered along with the more elaborate version given by Subhas Bose. Referring to the attitude of Gandhi towards the communal problem after he was elected the sole representative at the Round Table Conference, Bose says :

"In private and in public, he (Gandhi) began to say that his going to the Round Table Conference depended on his ability to solve the Hindu-Moslem question beforehand. Along with this statement he also began to say that if the Moslems made a united demand on the question of representation, elctorate, etc. in the new Constitution, he would accept the demand. The effect of these statements was a most tragic one. After the Delhi Pact, the reactionary Moslems had been somewhat overawed by the strength and power of the Congress and they were in a mood to come to terms with that body on a reasonable basis. The first statement of the Mahatma immediately changed that mood and made them feel that they held the key position, since if they refused to come to an understanding with him, they could prevent his attending the Round Table Conference. The second statement of the Mahatma made the reactionary Moslems feel that if only they would remain firm and secure the support of the Nationalist Moslems, the Mahatma could be forced to accept all their extreme demands. After the above statements had been made, the Mahatma had a conference with some reactionary Moslem leaders in Delhi in April. I was in Delhi at the time and I went to see him the same evening, after the conference. He seemed to be in a depressed mood, because they had presented him with the fourteen demands made by Mr. Jinnah (known in India as Jinnah's fourteen points), and he felt that an agreement would not be possible on that

. Disobedience movement, which came to a seemingly ignoble end, had a great value and importance in India's struggle for *Swaraj*. It demonstrated the awakening of political consciousness among the masses to a degree undreamt of before either by the friends or foes of India. It also gave evidence of the high moral inspiration and unflinching courage, infused among the people by Gandhi, the Saint, which give men strength to endure sufferings for the cause of the country to an extent which appears incredible to oridinary reasoning. The Mahatma's call to the people for sufferings and sacrifice found a response in the hearts of men and women of India to a degree which ensured the success of India's struggle for freedom. It was no longer a question of whether, but when she would reach the goal. Howsoever one might deplore Gandhi's political leadership, lack of wisdom and judgment in critical moments, and inability to carry on diplomatic negotiations with the astute British politicians, there is a consensus of opinion that India must ever remember with reverent gratitude his solid contribution to the moral regeneration of India's fighters for freedom which was an inestimable asset in the impending struggle.

Indirectly, the Civil Disobedience movement fully exposed the real nature of British rule in India in all its naked hideousness and lowered its moral prestige in the eyes of the whole world. As the great poet Rabindra Nath said, it was a great moral defeat for Europe, and Asia could now afford to look down on Europe where before she looked up.

## III. THE CONGRESS

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was considered at the annual session of the Congress at Karachi, held on March 29, 1931. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who presided over the Congress, strongly supported the Pact. He gave the go-by to the Lahore resolution on Independence and advocated

Dominion Status in his Presidential speech. Besides, he dwelt mainly on agrarian grievances and social and economic reforms—topics somewhat incongruous in the midst of a struggle for freedom or at least Responsible Government. The adoption of the Pact was of course a foregone conclusion, for the rank and file of the Congress party had gradually convinced themselves and deluded others into the belief that Gandhi had scored a great victory over the Government. Once again, Gandhi, the Saint, triumphed over Gandhi the politician. Indeed Gandhi's popularity seems to have reached the climax at this moment. An open air meeting preliminary to the regular session of the Congress was arranged at Karachi on March 25 where persons on an admission fee of four annas would be allowed to see and hear Gandhi. The collection amounted to ten thousand Rupees. It was at this meeting that Gandhi said that "Gandhi may die but Gandhism will live for ever."

The resolution of the Congress endorsing the Pact is a curious example of self-delusion and an attempt to mislead the people. The Pact, as mentioned above, clearly states the principle of constitutional development under the British with reservations for such matters as Defence, External Affairs, Financial Credit of India etc. Yet, according to the resolution of the Karachi Congress, while endorsing the Pact, "the Congress desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of *Purna Swaraj* remains intact." The resolution further adds that in the Conference "the Congress delegation will work for this objective and, in particular, so as to give the nation control over the defence forces, external affairs, finance, and fiscal and economic policy etc." An ordinary man, not a follower of a mystic saint, would find it very difficult to reconcile the acceptance of the Pact with the rest of the resolution. The whole thing seems to be a very clumsy

attempt to satisfy the conscience of that section of Congressmen who rightly interpreted the Pact as a clear departure from the declared goal and policy of the Congress. Though asked by Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru at first refused to move the resolution in the open session of the Congress. It went against his grain, he said. But, as usual, at the last moment he 'decided to sponsor it.'

The younger section, though disapproving the Pact for reasons mentioned above, did not oppse it in the plenary session of the Congress. The reasons in support of this attitude, as given by Subhas Bose,[63] do not appear to be convincing. But the sullen resentment of the youths found expression in other ways, particularly over the news of the execution of the three youths, Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and and Sukh Dev, convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. They were all leading revolutionaries, as will be related later. According to the official history of the Congress, 'at that moment Bhagat Singh's name was as widely known all over India and was as popular as Gandhi."[64] Pressure had been brought upon Gandhi to intercede with the Viceroy for the commutation of their capital punishment. Gandhi probably did his best, but the utmost that he could get from the Viceroy was an assurance to postpone the execution and reconsider the matter. This led the public, including Gandhi, to believe that the execution would be finally cancelled. But on March 23, only six days before the Congress session, Bhagat Singh and his two comrades were executed. The news filled the whole country with poignant grief and cast a gloom over the whole Congress Camp. The usual festivities on the opening day of the Congress were cancelled by the order of the President. The younger section, however, was under the impression that Gandhi did not press the matter upon the Viceroy's attention sufficiently strongly ; and when Subhas Bose suggested

to him that he should, if necessary, break with the Viceroy on the question, Gandhi, averse on principle to revolutionary activities, did not go so far. The younger section, therefore, held Gandhi in a way responsible for the death of Bhagat Singh ; and when Gandhi along with the President-elect Vallabhbhai Patel, alighted from the Railway train at a minor station, 12 miles from Karachi, they were met with a hostile demonstration and several young men offered black flowers and black garlands.

The matter did not end there. A resolution was moved at the Congress to place on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of the late Bhagat Singh and his comrades. According to the official history of the Congress, "it is really a point of doubt, even at this distance of time, as to which resolution was the more arresting one at Karachi,—that relating to Bhagat Singh or that relating to the ratification of the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement."[65] The resolution on Bhagat Singh was taken up immediately after the formal condolence resolutions. Gandhi and the Congress were averse to such resolutions in favour of revolutionaries, and therefore, to save the face, it was proposed to add a few words (italicised) by way of preamble to the resolution so as to read : The Congress, *while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form,* places on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of...etc. The younger section moved amendments for the omission of the words and the Volunteers' Conference actually passed the resolution without those words. The Congress, of course, adopted the resolution with those words, but while it was being debated in the Congress there was tumult and uproar from the outside. But even with the face-saving preamble, the resolution must have been a bitter pill for Gandhi to swallow. For he had strongly expressed his views against an exactly similar resolution

with reference to matters arising out of a contract to which they and the complainants are parties."[76] As the Viceroy, in his reply dated 13 August, supported the actions of the Governors of Bombay and U. P., Gandhi wired back on the same day that "it shows fundamental differences in our respective outlooks upon the settlement", and repeated his decision not to go to London to attend the Round Table Conference. Gandhi's decision was endorsed by the Congress Working Committe on 13 August.[77]

Gandhi's decision not to attend the Round Table Conference wsa also partly influenced by the fact that in spite of an assurance given by Irwin, Dr. Ansari, the Muslim Nationalist, was not nominated to the Round Table Conference. Lord Willingdon justified his action on the ground that the Musalman delegates were opposed to Ansari's delegation. It obviously fitted in with the policy of the Government to show that the Muslims were *en bloc* opposed to the Congress.

The events, however, took a dramatic turn. To remove misunderstanding Gandhi wrote a private letter to Lord Willingdon refuting the charges that he insisted upon a Board of Arbitration and was trying to set up a parallel Government. The main purpose of the letter was to inquire whether his decision not to attend the Round Table Conference meant an end of his Agreement with Irwin.[78] The Viceroy's reply pointed out that the failure of the Congress to attend the Round Table Conference defeated one of the main objects of the Agreement, but added that "Government would continue to avoid resort to special measures so far as possible restricting action to the requirements of the specific situation." Gandhi immediately wired to the Viceroy for an interview and met him along with Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal and Prabhasankar Pattani, the only delegate for the Round Table Conference who had not sailed with the rest by the S. S. *Mooltan* on 15 August

The results of the interview were summed up in an official communique. The Government agreed to hold an inquiry into the alleged coercion in collecting land-revenue in some villages in the Surat District, but 'not in regard to other matters hitherto raised by the Congress.' Gandhi accepted it with the reservation that if in extreme cases of hardship no inquiry is held, the Gongress retains the right of seeking relief in the shape of defensive direct action.[79]

The official history of the Congress takes it as a triumph for Gandhi, and writes : "Ultimately, after several hitches, matters were squared up and Gandhi left Simla by a special train so as to catch the train on the line which would enable him to sail on the 29th August."[80]

A mind, not obsessed with the infallibility of Gandhi, would find it difficult to admit that "matters were squared up," and would fail to understand how an important decision of national importance could be made and unmade in such a light-hearted manner. Considering the nature of the concessions made by the Government, any rational being is bound to hold that either Gandhi had not adequate grounds to boycott the Round Table Conference, or his eleventh hour decision to attend it was more an act of impulse than of reason. A devoted admirer of Gandhi had observed : "Gandhi saw things as if by a flash and framed his conduct by impulse. To the righteous man these two are the supreme guides of life, not reason nor intellect."[81] Perhaps this is best illustrated by the conduct of Gandhi in August, 1931. Such a righteous man or saint is, of course, above historical judgment, which can only proceed on the assumption that men's acts are, or should be, dictated by reason and intellect rather than by impulse. It is hardly necessary to add that the Working Committee, as in duty bound, duly endorsed both the decisions of Gandhi, first to abstain from the Round Table Conference, and next to attend it.

## IV. SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

There was a change of Government in Britain before the Second Round Table Conference opened on 7 September, 1931. The Labour Government was replaced by a National Government dominated by the Conservative Party. Ramsay MacDonald was still the Premier, but Sir Samuel Hoare, a Conservative, was the Secretary of State for India.

Gandhi arrived in London on 12 September. He delivered many fine speeches, both in and outside the Conference, elaborating his ideas of peace and goodwill on earth, emphasizing the unique position of the Indian National Congress as a national and not a party organization, explaining the supreme need of a partnership between Britain and India as between two equal nations, stressing the determination of the Congress to infect the British people with love for India, etc. Oblivious of the decisions already arrived at in the First R. T. Conference to which he had already subscribed in his Agreement with Lord Irwin, Gandhi stuck to the Karachi Resolution. He demanded that the Responsible Government must be established, *immediately* and *in full*, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, including complete control over the finance, army, defence and external relations. Safeguards were not needed and therefore no special powers should be given to the Governor-General. His presence and lofty idealism created great sensation, but his pious platitudes cut no ice with the British people or Government. Certain it is that his speeches, personality and appeals did not influence the deliberation and decision of the Conference in the slightest degree.

The outstanding feature of the Conference was the unending discussion on the communal problem. The representatives of the Muslims, Depressed Classes, Anglo-

Indians, a section of the Indian Christians, and the European commercial community concluded an agreement among themselves, but the Hindus and Sikhs did not accept it. Gandhi pointed out that the question of framing a Constitution should have precedence over the Communal problem and the Constitution might provide that failing any amicable agreement the question should be referred to a judicial tribunal for final decision. Nobody paid any heed to this and Ramsay MacDonald held that the inability to solve the communal question was hampering the progress of constitution-making. A suggestion was made in course of the discussion that the British Government should settle the dispute on its own authority. The Premier asked a plain question on this subject : "Will you, each of you, every member of the Committee, sign a request to me, to settle the community question and pledge yourself to accept my decision ? That, I think, is a very fair offer."[82] Most of the members, *but not all*, signed such a request.

Regarding the main problem of constitutional progress of India, the Second Round Table Conference did not make any further progress beyond working out some details of the plan already decided upon, and the Prime Minister closed the session on 11 December, 1931, by reiterating the policy he had announced before, at the beginning of the year.

Though Gandhi had failed most miserably, he received a grand ovation on his return to India, on 28 December, 1931. The grandeur of the ovation, we are told, exceeded all limits, but it also exceeded even the most incredible folly ever perpetrated by the devotees of Gandhi in his name. What, one may ask, was the occasion for the ovation ? Had Gandhi returned wirh *Swaraj* in the hollow of his hands, or had he brought back, what could be termed by the remotest stretch of imagination, peace with

basis. Thereupon I remarked that the Congress should only care for an agreement between Nationalist Hindus and Nationalist Moslems and that the agreed solution should be placed before the Round Table Conference as the Nationalist demand and that the Congress need not bother what other anti-Nationalist elements thought or said. The Mahatma then asked me if I had any objection to separate electorates since it could be argued that in the absence of the third party the different communities would live and work in concord. To this I replied that separate electorates were against the fundamental principles of Nationalism and that I felt so strongly on the subject that even Swaraj on the basis of separate electorates was, in my opinion, not worth having. While we were engaged in this discussion, Dr. Ansari and some of the Nationalist Moslem leaders, including Mr. Sherwani, arrived on the scene and joined in the discussion. They said that if for any reason the Mahatma gave up the demand for a common electorate for both Hindus and Moslems and accepted the demand of the reactionaries for a separate electorate for each community, they would oppose the reactionary Moslems and also the Mahatma, because they were convinced that separate electorates were bad not only for the country as a whole, but also for the different communities. The strong attitude of the Nationalist Moslems on this occasion was largely responsible for preventing the Mahatma from agreeing to separate electorates, and forced him to wriggle out of the uncomfortable situation in which he had placed himself. Soon after this, the Mahatma issued a public statement saying that he could not accept the demands made by the communalist Moslem leaders, since the Nationalist Moslems were opposed to them."[70]

The Working Committee of the Congress made an attempt to undo the mischief committed by Lahore.

Congress by presenting for the adoption of the country a scheme of communal agreement, which they claimed to be 'as nearly national as possible," though communal in appearance, and hoped would be generally acceptable to the communities concerned.

A long statement was issued by the Working Committee on July 20, 1931, and it is described in the official history as the *magnum opus* of the Congress. In practical supersession of the Lahore Resolution mentioned above,[71] the Working Committee offered a scheme of communal settlement on the following basis :

"1. (a). The article in the Constitution relating to Fundamental Rights shall include a guarantee to the communities concerned of their cultures, languages, scripts, education, profession and practice of religion, and religious endowments.

(b). Personal laws shall be protected by specific provisions to be embodied in the Constitution.

(c). Protection of political and other rights of minority communities in the various Provinces shall be the concern and be within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government.

... ... ... ... ...

3. (a). Joint electorates shall form the basis of representation in the future Constitution of India.

(b). For the Hindus in Sind, the Muslims in Assam and the Sikhs in the Panjab and the North-West Frontier Province, and for Hindus and Muslims in any Province where they are less than 25 per cent. of the population, seats shall be reserved on the Federal and Provincial Legislatures on the basis of population with the right to contest additional seats."

... ... ... ... ...

7. Sind shall be constituted into a separate Province,

provided that the people of Sind are prepared to bear the financial burden of the separated Province.

8. The future Constitution of the country shall be federal. The residuary powers shall vest in the federating units, unless, on further examination, it is found to be against the best interests of India."[72]

But the communal problem, in spite of its great importance, justly stressed by Gandhi, was cast into shade by the deliberate policy of the Government to ignore the stipulations of the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement.

Lord Irwin was succeeded by Lord Willingdon as Viceroy on April 17, 1931, and in spite of his sympathetic speeches, officials had resumed the repressive campaign in various ways. Gandhi felt obliged to make complaints of the violation of the Agreement he made with Irwin, and there ensued a long correspondence between him and the Government. The Government maintained that "Local Governments have been scrupulous in carrying out the obligations imposed on them" by the Agreement, and in support of this view sent extracts from official reports to Gandhi. Gandhi replied that the information that he was receiving almost daily from the workers, who were thoroughly reliable eye-witnesses, made him distrust the official reports. He therefore requested the Home Secretary to the Government of India to appoint Boards of Inquiry in different Provinces, each consisting of an official and a Congress nominee, to conduct a summary inquiry into the allegations on either side. This the Secretary refused point-blank. His argument was that of the typical bureaucrat. Referring to Gandhi's proposal he observed : "In other words, the duty of maintaining law in this particular respect ( picketing ) would be transferred from the Police, who have statutory duties, to a board of enquiry the members of which might well arrive at a different conclusion, while the *police, of course, must act only in accord-*

*ance with the law.* It is not practicable nor was it intended by the settlement that their duty in this respect should in any way be abrogated."[73]

Similarly the Government also turned down Gandhi's suggestion for the appointment of a permanent board of arbitration to decide questions of interpretation of the Agreement.[74] Gandhi forwarded a specific list of eleven points on the interpretation of which there was a difference between the Government and the Congress, and requested that they may be referred to an impartial tribunal. But the Government turned it down on the ground, "that it would not be possible for the Government to agree to any arrangement which involved the suspension of the ordinary law or of the regular machinery of administration, or which included the appointment of an external authority to whom the Government would delegate the responsibility for reaching decision in matters closely affecting the administration." On the other hand, the Government complained that "the activities of the Congress during the past five months i. e. March-July, were contrary both to the letter and spirit of the Delhi settlement and had involved a constant menace to the maintenance of peace in U. P. and N. W. F. P."[75]

While this correspondence was going on, reports reached Gandhi from different quarters, particularly U. P. and N. W. F. P., of serious violations of the agreement he had made with Irwin. In disgust he wired to the Viceroy on 11 August that he would not sail for England. He was particularly mortified at the attitude of the Governor of U. P. and at a letter from the Bombay Government in which it was claimed, in effect, that the Government must be the final judge of facts as well as of law. Gandhi referred to it in his telegram to the Viceroy and said that "in naked terms, this means that the Government should be both the prosecutor and the judge

honour ? As he himself admitted, with truth, he returned empty-handed. The popular demonstration was nothing but a ludicrous exhibition of the pathetic lack of a sense of political realities among the Indians in general and Gandhiites in particular. The day should have been observed as one of mourning and humility, not of joy and gaiety.

## D. RESUMPTION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

### I. REACTIONARY POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT.

Immediately after his return to India on 28 December, 1931, Gandhi was apprised of the tense political situation in India, of which he had some inkling even while he was in London.

The promised inquiry into the alleged police excesses in connection with the collection of revenue in Surat District on the basis of which he agreed to attend the Round Table Conference, had ended in a fiasco.

The no-rent campaign in U. P., which was suspended after the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, was revived. The Government demanded that the peasants should pay up their dues pending negotiations, while the peasants asked for suspension of payment during the negotiations. On the refusal of the Government, the Provincial Congress Committee had advised the peasants to withhold payment of rent during negotiations. The Government thereupon made wholesale arrests of Congress workers. Jawaharlal and Purushottamdas Tandon were arrested only five days before the return of Gandhi from London.

In the N. W. F. P. the organization of the Khudai Khidmatgars or Red Shirt Volunteers of Abdul Gaffar Khan was declared illegal. The Khan, who was called Frontier Gandhi for his scrupulous non-violent policy, his brother, and some other leaders were thrown into prison, and within a few months several thousand Red

Shirts were put behind the bars. Thereafter troops were sent into the villages to terrorize the people and break up the organization.

An acute situation had developed in Bengal. There were several terrorist outrages, generally believed to have been acts of reprisals for oppressive conduct. The murder of the Inspector-General of Prisons and of three successive Magistrates of Midnapore was evidently the result, respectively, of ill treatment of prisoners and the atrocities committed to suppress the no-tax campaign. To retaliate such terrorist outrages, reprisals were made by, or at the connivance of, the Government. The town of Chittagong was left at the mercy of non-official Europeans and a band of hooligans for three days, and looting went on in broad daylight without the least interference by the Police. Even the State-prisoners at the Hijli (Bengal) Camp were fired upon and struck with the butt-end.

These incidents are merely illustrative and not an exhaustive list of official repression. In addition, repressive ordinances were in force in Bengal, U. P., and N. W. F. P. Thus, on his return to India on 28 December, 1931, Gandhi found the whole thing in a pretty mess. He sent a telegram to the Viceroy on 29 December, referring to the Government oppression and asking for an interview. The VIceroy wired his reply on 31 December. He justified the actions of the Government on the ground of terrorism and rebellious attitude shown by the people, and then added : "The Viceroy was unwilling to believe that Gandhi was personally responsible for the Congress activities in U. P. and N. W. F. P. or approved of them. "If this is so", the telegram continued, "he is willing to see you", but he "feels bound to emphasise that he will not be prepared to discuss with you measures which Government of India, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal,

U. P. and N. W. F. P. "These measures must in any case be kept in force."[83]

Gandhi wired a very dignified reply to the Government telegram of the 31st December, on the very next day. He pointed out that the Viceroy in effect asked him to repudiate his valued colleagues in advance before he could be granted an interview and even then could not discuss the matters of vital importance to the nation. He then challenged the correctness of the official version of happenings in U. P. and N.W.F.P. As regards Bengal he said, "whilst the Congress would condemn in unmeasurable terms the methods of terrorism, it can in no way associate itself with Government terrorism as is betrayed by the Bengal Ordinance and acts done thereunder, but must resist, within the limits of its prescribed creed of non-violence, such measures of legalized Government terrorism." Gandhi repeated his offer of co-operation and his willingness "to go to the respective Provinces and, with the aid of the authorities, study both sides of the question." But he pointed out that if his efforts failed to persuade the Government, he would have no other course left but to resume Civil Disobedience.[84] The plan was already tentatively sketched by the Working Committee and he communicated to the Viceroy the full text of the Resolution, which is merely an amplification of Gandhi's telegram. The operative part of the resolution reads as follows :

"The Working Committee is prepared to tender co-operation to the Government, provided His Excellency the Viceroy reconsiders his telegram and adequate relief is granted in respect of the Ordinances and its recent acts, free scope is left to the Congress in any future further negotiations to prosecute the Congress claim for Complete Independence, and the administration of the country is carried on in consultation with popular representatives, pending the attainment of such Independence.

"In the absence of any satisfactory response from the Government in terms of the foregoing paragraph, the Working Committee will regard it as an indication on the part of the Government that it has reduced to nullity the Delhi Pact. In the event of a satisfactory response not forthcoming, the Working Committee calls upon the Nation to resume Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes."[85]

The Government reply to this was, of course, a foregone conclusion. In a telegram dated 2nd January, 1932, the Viceroy refused even to contemplate the possibility of an interview "held under the threat of resumption of Civil Disobedience." In his reply and final telegram, dated the 3rd, Gandhi reminded the Government of India that negotiations between him and Lord Irwin were opened whilst Civil Disobedience was on, that when the Agreement was concluded Civil Disobedience was not given up but only discontinued, and that this position was re-asserted and accepted by Lord Willingdon in Simla in September last.[86] This telegram marked the end of the correspondence between the Viceroy and Gandhi which covered exactly six days from December 29, 1931 to January 3, 1932, and heralded the revival of Civil Disobedience.

Long extracts have been quoted from the correspondence in order to convey a fair idea of the attitude of both the parties and provide sufficient materials for forming a fair judgment on the responsibility that must be shared by each for the resumption of hostilities. It would appear that each accused the other of violating the Agreement, and there was fundamental difference between the two regarding the nature and course of events that actually took place. The Government of India took up the position that the official statements of facts must be regarded as true. Such a claim cannot stand a moment's scrutiny as it can be proved by numerous instances that

the official version proved to be quite inaccurate and not unoften a deliberate distortion of facts to justify the official action. It is a matter of common knowledge that on an ultimate analysis the facts supplied to the Government of India emanated originally from the local officials of a lower grade and passed through senior officers who based their actions on them. If there was any outcry against any course of action the very official who was directly or indirectly responsible for it was also usually entrusted with the investigation. It is obvious that in such circumstances there was little chance of finding out the truth if there were no independent inquiry. Gandhi showed remarkable fairness of mind, and demonstrated his innate love of truth, when, in spite of allegations of Government terrorism and violation of agreement made by reliable persons of unimpeachable character, he approached the Viceroy for discussing a *modus operandi* for ascertaining the truth. By persistently refusing this very reasonable demand the Government undoubtedly put themselves in the wrong, and they must share the chief responsibility for plunging the country once more into the throes of Civil Disobedience campaign, involving chaos and confusion and inflicting untold miseries and sufferings on a large section of innocent people.

The elaborate defence of the Government of India in a statement issued on January 4, 1932, over the signature of Mr. Emerson, was smashed to pieces by the rejoinder published in the *Young India* of January 14, which fully exposed its unscrupulous character by showing how "it is packed full of evasions, false statements, suppressions, and dishonest distortions."[87] Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya also thoroughly exposed the hollowness of the Government pleas in justification of their conduct. Mr. Brailsford, writing in the *New Leader*, condemned the Viceroy's conduct, which was "as petty as it was unreasoning".

"It is fantastic", observed he, "to summon Mr. Gandhi to London to discuss the rights which Indians shall enjoy tomorrow and at the same time. to refuse to listen when he would defend such rights as they ought to enjoy today". Even the semi-official organ, *The Times of India*, regretted the Viceroy's action, while the moderate *Servant of India* observed : "The Viceroy's action in refusing to let the greatest political leader in the country place his views regarding the Ordinances before the head of the Government cannot but be deplored as a blunder. It was both indefensible and discourteous.[88]

The most impartial account and dispassionate judgment of the whole episode are to be found in a short treatise written by an eminent English scholar, Verrier Elwin.[89] Referring to the charge that Congress precipitated the conflict with Government in the United Provinces, he makes the following observations :

"The state of the United Provinces peasant is pitiable. To visit the villages in the eastern districts of the province is a heart-breaking experience . ...There is almost nothing to eat.........Upon these starving villagers there falls with merciless regularity the demand for rent. Unable to pay, they are beaten, abused, turned out of what shelter they have, robbed of half the possessions. And while their earning capacity has fallen by 50 per cent. the rent and revenue demands have been steadily rising...Government sanctioned remissions to the extent of a little over two and a half annas in the rupee. But the price of agricultural produce had fallen by over eight annas in the rupee, and the Congress voiced the feelings of the peasants in declaring the proposed remissions totally inadequate. Negotiations between Government and Congress were in progress when the rents for the coming year began to be demanded. The peasants were told that if the year's rent was not paid within a month, even the

remissions might be withdrawn. No objections could be raised without making payment of the rent demanded. Still the Congress tried the way of negotiation, but when this proved ineffective, it had no alternative but to advise suspension of payment pending the result of negotiations. It was made clear, however, that Congress would withdraw this advice if the authorities on their own initiative suspended collections on the same condition......This can hardly be called a no-rent campaign...Government could easily, without loss to itself or the landlords, have issued instructions for the temporary postponement of the collections of rents until negotiations were concluded. But Government precipitated a conflict, first by demanding payment while negotiations about the payment were still in progress, and then by promulgating an Ordinance of a severity out of all proportion to the necessities of the situation.

"In the N.W.F.P. the action of Government was more indefensible", continues Mr. Elwin. "It is true that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan used the Truce as an opportunity to organize the Congress movement on the Frontier...... What he did achieve was to spread the idea of non-violence widely among the Pathans, to create in them some sort of political consciousness, and to organise a very large army of strictly pacifist volunteers. His great crime was that he was too successful. He became a rival to the Chief Commissioner.........Some of his speeches, if correctly reported, do indeed seem likely to foment racial hatred, but if the Khan Sahib were fomenting racial hatred he was entitled to an open trial where he could have defended himself against the accusation.

"There was no warrant whatever for the promulgation of the Frontier Ordinance except the desire of Government to crush the Congress movement in the Province. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was no danger to the

public peace. There were no riots, no assassinations. My own impression, after a personal visit to the Frontier, was that Abdul Ghaffar Khan had lessened the amount of racial hatred, he had not increased it. As a speaker in the Assembly observed, he deserves a reward rather than imprisonment for his great national service of promoting the spirit of non-violence. He was in fact simply doing what the Govermnent ( if it were sincere in its professions to hand over political power to India ) should have welcomed—creating a political consciousness among the people, and thus preparing them in the most practical way for self-government. By the Ordinance (of which Sir Abdur Rahim said that he could hardly believe his eyes when he read it ) Government declared war on the Congress in the Frontier Province and deliberately provoked a conflict."

After reviewing the whole situation in detail Mr. Elwin makes the following general observations : "The real failure to observe the spirit of the Settlement appears to me to have been on the other side. Local Governments showed their utmost unwillingness to follow the lead of Lord Irwin. Mahatma Gandhi had great difficulty in persuading them to give full effect to the political amnesty......He never managed to secure the readmission of students who had been dismissed on political grounds from educational institutions. The local authorities put every obstacle in the way of restoration to the original owners of lands in Kaira and Bardoli that had been sold to third parties. In Ahmedabad, rules about the hours and places of the sale of liquor were deliberately relaxed in order to circumvent the peaceful picketing that was permitted under the Settlement......

"Nor was Government itself behindhand in preparing for a future conflict. Ceaseless propaganda was carried on against the Congress. A circular letter, for example,

was issued by a United Provinces Collector directing taluqdars to furnish complaints against Congressmen. A similar letter was issued by a Collector in Karnatak to police officers. The revival of civil disobedience sooner or later was to be regarded as a foregone certainty, and district police officers were asked to keep a close watch on the movements and utterances of all congressmen with a view to facilitating their prosecution when the time for it came. The speed and thoroughness with which it was able to strike on the renewal of civil disobedience show how well Government used the Truce as a preparation for conflict."[90]

Indeed a careful review of all relevant circumstances leads a historian to the justifiable belief that the Government of India, under Willingdon, smarting under the indignity of Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, made a deliberate plan to undo the 'mischief', as far as possible, by forcing the resumption of civil disobedience so that they could put it down by brute force and thus wipe away the 'disgrace' of asking for truce in the first round of the fight.

This is abundantly clear from the fact that under the cover of truce the Government had made elaborate preparations to fight the impending Civil Disobedience. They were caught unawares in 1930, but being now fully cognizant of the method followed by the Congress they had made arrangements to grapple with the stiuation at a moment's notice. They had already promulgated three Ordinances and four more were kept ready, The net result of these Ordinances, whose provisions will be described later in this Chapter, was to arm the Executive with all necessary powers over the life and property of the people. In short, the fiat of the Executive took the place of Law. The Government did not neglect even minute details. At least one local Government had ordered thousands of new *lathis* during the truce period. Whatever we may think

of this, the fact remains, that whereas *lathi*-charge was a later development in 1930, it was "the first friend that greeted the Satyagrahis" in 1932.

## II. THE PART PLAYED BY NON-OFFICIAL EUROPEANS.

But the Government were not acting alone. They were backed by the entire non-official European community. Like the Government they had scant regard for the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement and were devising plans to kill the Civil Disobedience movement, which they feared—or rather hoped—, would soon be resumed. How their mind was working even during the period of truce will be evident from a letter which the Bombay Branch of the European Association wrote to the Secretary, Home Department, Government of Bombay, after the presentation of an address to him on 15th October, 1931, by the Europeans of Poona. It made the following specific suggestions to counter Civil Disobedience in the event of its revival :

(1) That immediately Civil Disobedience was declared Congress should be declared an illegal body, and Congress property and property used for Congress purposes should be confiscated and at once sold or destroyed.

(2) That the flying of the Congress flag, and all kinds of ceremonial connected therewith, should immediately be forbidden.

(3) That similar action should be taken in regard to parading or drilling of volunteers and similar operations of a military nature.

(4) That all those who are known to have been responsible for the organisation or financing of the last Civil Disobedience movement should be at once brought under control and, if necessary, put under restraint. It is suggested, in fact, that they should be treated in the same fashion as enemy subjects interned during the war.

(5) That provision should be made to prevent any

person or bodies from deriving financial benefits as a result of political upheaval. Both regulations might be compared with those adopted in the United Kingdom against profiteering during the war. Two specific methods by which it is suggested that such provisions might be made effective are: (a) That steps should be taken to stop Congress funds at source, accompanied, if necessary, by an Ordinance compelling the production of banking accounts; (b) that textile mills or other commercial undertakings which have signed agreements with Congress, while that body has not been proscribed as illegal, should be required immediately to withdraw adherence to any compact with Congress on pain of being denied rail transit for their goods. Something of this kind would appear to be vital, one of the terms accepted by at any rate some of these signatories, being an undertaking to give Government no assistance in any action which they may take against so-called national activities.

The Deputation which made this representation was led by Mr. Abercrombie, who, in his letter to the Home Department, sent on the suggestion of the Home Member, wrote :

"My Committee, therefore, request that persons in the employ of the Government may be sent in the guise of ordinary citizens to picketed shops, demand the goods of mills banned by Congress, with the police in readiness to arrest picketers if any coercion or intimidation is used."

The Home Member was also informed that unless this was done there would be counter-picketing, or merchants would "take the law into their own hands in other ways."

"......If the Government make all other considerations subordinate to the need for prompt and decisive measures against the movement the moment it reappears, there will be no room for doubt as to its object, and an attitude of conciliation will be tantamount to suicide.

The greater the latitude permitted, the longer and more bitter will be the struggle and the worse the suffering. It cannot be too strongly urged upon the Government that if the revolutionary movement again gets under way their action must be prompt, vigorous and even ruthless. Congress must not be given time for the full mobilisation of its undoubtedly powerful forces."

"A copy of Mr. Abercrombie's letter to the Home Department, from which the above extracts are taken, was circulated on the 28th October, 1931, by Mr. Chapman Mortimer, General Secretary of the European Association of India, to all circles and branches, with the comment that the views of the Bombay branch had the full support of the President and Council of the Association.

"The Abercrombie circular may thus be regarded as the view of the organized European community in India during the period of the Truce, when the Round Table Conference was sitting in London."

It is significant that the policy actually adopted by the Government closely followed the lines suggested by the European Association. The Council of the European Association, at its meeting in Delhi in February, 1932, urged (1) that the main provisions of the Ordinances must remain operative ; (2) that Congressmen and women then in prison should remain in jail unless prepared to recant ; (3) that if the Government were to announce a policy of not releasing these it would secure co-operation from those who are at present doubtful of the Government's intentions, in addition to maintaining the support of those who already co-operate ; (4) that these men and women should remain in prison until provincial institutions are established.

The Bombay Branch of the European Association, on the 31st March, 1932, when the Ordinances were in full swing, demanded stronger action. At the Annual Meeting, at which H. E. the Governor of Bombay was

present, Mr. Miller, the retiring President of the Association, said :

"We fully support the Government of India in the manner in which they have tackled the situation since the beginning of the year, which, if anything, in my opinion, has erred on the side of leniency......We are satisfied that there will be no weakening on the part of the Government, and indeed there may be need for stronger action, though we sincerely hope this may not be necessary......"[91]

## III. REPRESSIVE MEASURES OF THE GOVERNMENT

Gandhi sent his final telegram on 3 January, 1932. To this there was no reply. On 4 January, the Government issued a manifesto in justification of its policy and began the offensive by promulgating four new Ordinances, and arresting, in the early hours of the morning, both Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel. Khan Shaheb and Jawaharlal were already in prison and the other political leaders were secured in batches. As to the rank and file nearly ninety thousand men, women, and children were convicted and sentenced.

The lot of the prisoners was miserable in the extreme. "More than ninety-five per cent. of the persons convicted were placed in the 'C' class. There was a very small sprinkling of Congressmen placed in the 'B' class, while the 'A' class was maintained only in name in several places, and very sparingly granted in others...Graduates, Professors, Lawyers, Editors, well-to-do traders and businessmen, rich Zamindars, high grade agriculturists, and philanthropic workers, including men whom the Government themselves recognised as well-to-do by imposing heavy fines running often into four figures, were all thrown pell-mell into the last class, with the food and clothing of ordinary convicts."[92] These people were not likely to submit always to the most humiliating conditions (such as

sitting in a particular posture) imposed upon the ordinary convicts, composed of thieves and robbers. For disobeying these laws further penalties were imposed upon them, and they were not unoften victims of beating and other kinds of torture as these could be inflicted with impunity within the four walls of the prison house. It would appear from the testimony of numerous prisoners of those days that in many police lock-ups and jails "unmentionable atrocities and tortures were perpetrated, the variety and cruelty of which varied with the intelligence, resourcefulness and callousness of the particular officers concerned. Even women, boys and children were not spared."[93] Unutterable things were said and unspeakable punishments were planned. In spite of all precautions cases of such brutality sometimes came to the knowledge of the public. "For instance, in the Nasik Jail on October 27th, Mr. Amritlal Morarji, a political prisoner who had been given bar-fetters, was taken to a cell, beaten by five jail-officials with batons and lifted up and dashed down till he became unconscious. There was intense indignation when the news saw the light of day, and Government had to order the prosecution of the jail-officials responsible for the incident."[94]

As could be expected, *lathi*-charge, i. e. merciless and reckless beating on any part of the body with iron-shod heavy bamboo sticks, was the order of the day. There were several new features in the repressive programme of the Government. In the first place, the Ordinances covered much wider ground, and any act which might be even remotely construed as 'dislike of or disaffection towards any official, down to a petty Chaukidar,' such as refusing to rent a house on reasonable (according to the official) rent, sell articles at reasonable prices etc., might involve punishment with fine or imprisonment.

Another novel method was an elaborate plan to cut

off the resources and supplies of Congress and other disapproved organizations. The Bombay Government forfeited an amount of more than thirty-three lakhs of Rupees belonging to the Gujarat Sabha.[94a] There were other cases of this nature. Among other prominent features of the Government repression may be mentioned :

1. Mass punishments, punitive impositions, victimization of neighbours, relatives etc.

2. Confiscation of lands, cattle, utensils and personal belongings ; destruction of property and closing down of social service and similar institutions. Government had taken possession of Congress offices and *ashrams*.

3. Ill-treatment of women and children.

4. Externment and internment at the direction of the Executives.

5. Whipping of juvenile and flogging of adult volunteers who were guilty of picketing, hoisting of Congress flags or such acts of Civil Disobedience as breaking of forest laws.

6. Frequent resorts to firing on unarmed crowds. Replying to a question in the Indian Legislative Assembly, the Home Member to the Government of India, Mr. (later Sir) H. G. Haig stated that in dispersing assemblies, "firing was resorted to seventeen times in Bengal, seven times in the United Provinces, three times in Bihar and Orissa, once in Madras Presidency, once in the Frontier Province—while in Bombay Presidency the casualties from shooting were thirty-four killed and ninety-one wounded."[95]

As regards the nature of the crimes to punish which all these terrors of repression were let loose by the Government of India, it is described as follows by the India League Delegation to which fuller reference will be made in the next Section.

"Civil Disobedience is often spoken of as lawlessness. Inasmuch as it is defiance of existing law it is "lawless."

But it would be a gross misrepresentation to describe the Civil Disobedience campaign as a movement which lets loose lawless people on society; a campaign in which everybody was asked to do as they pleased. Still more would it be grotesque to describe it as an encouragement to violence, crime, or licence. Civil resisters do not go about breaking laws as they please, nor interfering with the liberty of others. Civil Disobedience is a form of direct action against the Government of the day. Its moral basis is that law in India is not based on consent; its administration is under alien direction; and its ends are not determined by Indian wills or purposes. Civil Disobedience thus becomes both a moral protest and weapon of attack on the present system of administration."[96]

So far as the Civil Resisters were concerned their activities were mainly the following:

1. Leading processions in contravention of Police and prohibitory notices.

2. Holding public meetings and conferences in spite of bans imposed on them.

3. Picketing and boycotting of British goods, banks, insurance companies, mints and bullion exchanges.

4. Issuing unauthorized bulletins and cyclostyle leaflets and distributing them among the people.

5. Saluting the national flag in public and hoisting it over civil and criminal courts and public buildings.

6. Withholding of land revenue and Chaukidari tax.

7. Violating restraint orders and refusing to be on police parole.

8. Attempting to reoccupy Congress offices taken possession of by the Police.

9. Manufacturing salt.

In addition to these local activities of a routine nature, there were also campaigns of an all-India character planned and organized by the Working Committee. Among

these may be mentioned the celebration of the National Week (April 6-13) and the holding of the Annual Session of the Congress at Delhi despite the Police ban and the strictest surveillance. It was followed by Political Conferences all over the country and the celebration of special 'days' like the All-India Prisoner's Day, Peshawar Day etc. It must be noted that the Civil Resisters made no physical resistance, even when they were arrested or mercilessly beaten, and did not defend themselves in court even against false accusations, for they took no part in any judicial trial.

While the Officials took credit for successfully stopping the Congress Session at Delhi, the facts ascertained on the most reliable authority are as follows :

It was announced that the annual session of the Congress will be held at Delhi on 24 April. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the President-elect, was served with an order on April 22 at the Jumna Bridge entrance to Delhi, prohibiting the entry of himself and his party into Delhi. Malaviya, having disobeyed the order, was arrested and taken to the Central Jail in a lorry. In spite of Police vigilance and the arrests of delegates at all Railway stations, about 1500 delegates succeeded in reaching Delhi. Although many private houses were searched and guarded, the Subjects Committee of the Congress met on April 23, drafted five resolutions, and circulated them among the delegates for signature. On the 24th there was a *hartal* in the city in contravention of the Police order, and armed Police, mounted, in foot, and on lorries patrolled the town. While the Police were still combing out houses and scouring premises of all kinds, about 500 delegates, who were not yet arrested, gathered at the Clock Tower at the Chandni Chawk, and Seth Ranchhoddas, a delegate from Ahmadabad, officiated as the Chairman. The printed resolutions of the Subjects Committee, which had been circulated the previous

day, were read aloud by all together in unison and were adopted. They referred to the imprisonment of the Congressmen and the leaders, confirmed the Karachi resolution on Independence, the leadership of Gandhi, and the Civil Disobedience programme issued by the Woiking Committee. The session lasted only ten minutes. By the time the Police lorries arrived the session was over. The acting President and the delegates were arrested. Prosecutions were launched against a few, and the rest were released. Pandit Malaviya was released on May 1. The whole incident showed how deeply rhe Congress was rooted in the affection of the people and how futile was the endeavour of the British Government to crush the Civil Disobedience movement.

## IV. GENERAL REVIEW OF THE SITUATION BY INDIA LEAGUE DELEGATION

It is extremely fortunate for history that we possess a very detailed account of the political situation in India during the Civil Disobedience campaign of 1932, by an authoritative, independent and impartial body. It was a small delegation sent by India League, London, to study at first hand the complex situation in India. The Delegation consisted of Miss Monica Whately, Miss Ellen Wilkinson (ex-M. P.), Leonard W. Matters, and V. K. Krishna Menon. The composition of the Delegation is a guarantee that the report is not likely to be partial to the Indians and cannot, in any case, be charged with any preconceived prejudice or hostility against the British.

The Delegation reached Bombay on August 17, 1932, and left India on November 7. During this period they went to every Province of British India except C.P,, visited many important towns and villages, and met Indians of every class and shade of opinion as well as officials, both British and Indian. The facts and views they collected in this way formed the basis of their report, published in

1934.[97] Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, had stated in the House of Commons that "the scenes were stage-managed (by the Congress) for this delegation, and from start to finish they saw this carefully managed side of the picture." But the Delegation fully exposed the hollowness of this charge which could not be sustained by him when challenged by the Leader of the Opposition. It is hardly necessary to refute the view expressed by Hoare that all his Indian correspondents, from the Viceroy downwards, were of opinion that the Delegation "were biassed in the views they took." Every unprejudiced reader wil admit that the Report is a very valuable record of acts of terrorism perpetrated in 1932, collected with scrupulous care, and accepted after a critical scrutiny of evidence. It is difficult to conceive of a more impartial judgment on the British excesses that anyone could think of, than by a set of four persons of whom three were Britishers and on whose judgment a historian could safely rely. It is seldom indeed that such an account of a complicated and extensive civil turmoil in a vast country like India is available for the purpose of ascertaining truth. After narrating briefly the circumstances that led to the breakdown of the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement the Delegation observes: "The officials in India rebelled against the approach and the settlement made by Lord Irwin. They regarded it as a surrender of Government prestige and the recognition of the Congress as a rival authority. They regarded the settlement as an administrative blunder and their own position under it as humiliating. They therefore desired the truce conditions to come to an end." The Delegation says that the view contained in the first sentence was "put to us in so many words by a very high official in the N. W. F. P. in his very frank conversation. As to the rest Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has stated that he has in his possession letters and circulars to substantiate this

contention."[98] The view of the Delegation is in full accord with what has been said above.

The Report comments : "We found throughout India that the Viceroy's refusal to allow Mr. Gandhi to see him was regarded as a mistake......For the Viceroy's action in January last we could find no support in India ; it is also clear from the press correspondence and statements issued by party leaders at that time that Lord Willingdon's action brought about the conflict."[99]

The Delegation further observes :

"Large numbers of organisations and individuals, the majority of whom have consistently supported the Government, made representations to the Viceroy to revise his decision. In Bombay a section of progressive European opinion urged the Viceroy to receive Mr. Gandhi unconditionally, irrespective of what had transpired or was thought necessary in the future. The appended list will show that the protests came from a variety of groups of opinion." ( List of seven organizations and four leaders, two Indian and two European, follows).

These important organisations and individuals endeavoured to intervene during the critical days of the first week of January, 1932. The list does not include the hundreds of organisations all over India which protested against the Government's decision, nor does it claim to be exhaustive.[100]

The Delegation also supports the view that the Government deliberately precipitated the conflict and planned it long beforehand. It observes : "Though from the communique released by the Government it would seem that the cause of the precipitate action taken by the Government was the resolution passed by the Working Committee following the events in the U. P. and the N. W. F. P., the impression that the Government had decided on policy of repression even before the Second

R. T. C. concluded cannot be regarded as unjustified in the light of certain obvious facts.

As an instance of the irresponsibility of the Executive authority the Report refers to the following incident.

"At the Hijli Detention Camp, sentries opened fire on untried prisoners on the 15th September, 1930. An official committee consisting of Justice S. C. Mallik, I.C.S., and Mr. J. G. Drummond was appointed by the Bengal Government, as a result of public agitation, to inquire into the incident. The Committee found that there was a regular fusillade from the sepoys (the armed guard), that there was "no justification whatsoever for the indiscriminate firing," and that the *detenues* were assaulted by the *sepoys* with *lathis* and bayonets also without justification. In the face of the facts of the conduct of the prison officials and the executive which this official report brought to light, it is rather extraordinary that the Bengal Government should decide to arm the officials and prison authorities with greater powers. Mr. Gandhi, while in London, challenged the British press publicly to publish the facts. The challenge was not accepted. The Government deliberately misrepresented the state of things in India to the British public and kept them ignorant of the atrocities perpetrated in the name of law and order. The Delegation observes :

"We, in this country, were told that the Government's policy was a success and that more and more Indian opinion was supporting the Government. At the same time stories of atrocities and oppression reached this country through private channels. The Press appeared either to be badly served or to be suppressing news about India. Allegations made in Parliament were denied by the Secretary of State. The Forrester Paton Case[100a] opened the eyes of some who had hitherto believed that the British administration was incapable of the things with

which it was charged.[101]

The Forrester Paton Case is thus described in the Report. Dr. Forrester Paton, a Scottish missionary, was severely beaten with *lathis*, wounded on the ribs, legs and arms and then drenched with coloured water. When he tried to move away, the police turned a hose on him a second time. Dr. Forrester Paton is a member of a well-known Scottish Liberal family and had powerful friends in the House of Commons. The case was taken up by the late Sir Duncan Millar, and Sir Samuel Hoare expressed regret. The Home Member of the Madras Government, in answer to questions in the Madras legislature, however, declined to accept the position taken up by the Secretary of State. Dr. Paton was arrested on a false charge of picketing, which was withdrawn. Actually Dr. Paton was in Madras to make inquiries about Red Cross work, and he had no connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement.[102]

In conclusion we might consider the all-round effect of the Civil Disobedience campaign and the measures by which the Government sought to repress it. On 13 October, 1932, Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, said in course of an interview :

"Eighteen months ago things were in a mess. I will guarantee that conditions are to-day a hundred per cent. better than they were then, and I go further and guarantee that the people of India are a hundred per cent. happier—now that they can be sure of protection and liberty to go about their business as they wish."

Diametrically opposite view was expressed by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, one of the most renowned leaders of the Moderate Party, who never supported or sympathized with the Civil Disobedience movement.

"Bitterness has increased tenfold and suspicion and distrust of Government is not peculiar to Congressmen

but is shared by non-Congressmen......... I am absolutely certain that the sentiment of the people is decidedly anti-Government, and I have no doubt whatsoever that if Congress should decide to contest the elections they will sweep the board nearly everywhere."[103]

The view expressed by the India League Delegation may be quoted in part :

"The Indian villager, in our experience, belied the stories about him that are so common. He is not apathetic, nor is he ignorant (though illiterate). He is fully aware of his plight and its economic and political causes. He is no admirer of the British Raj. He knows that the fight for Swaraj has to be carried on till it is won. He looks on the Congressman as his friend. Indeed, in these villages a Congressman or volunteer is always welcome, every house, except that of Government loyalists, is open to him and he retains the affection of the people. The Indian village is a homogeneous unit. It has a voice which covers Hindu and Mussalman, and farmer and lahourer. It is prepared to fight and suffer or make compromise as a whole. The subtle arguments and the distinctions which obsess the town politician do not agitate the villager. The women-folk, old and young, particularly in Hindu areas, are conscious partners in the awakening of the village, and it is this that lends to the resistance put up by the Congress movement much of its fighting material, and its tenacity of purpose is very great.

"In every village in India Gandhi's name was known and reverenced. In Gujerat, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and in the United Provinces the Pundit Nehru are household names. Their imprisonment has only added to the affection in which they are held and increased their prestige."[104]

The general impression of the methods pursued by the Government in dealing with the Civil Disobedience campaign has been thus expressed by the Delegation :

"We had not understood what the expression Police Raj, which we have heard used so often, meant till we came to India and saw it in action. The Police are a law unto themselves. Petty officials exercise very wide powers which are freely used. The statement that in India "the police beat first and inquire afterwards" is only partially true to-day, as there is no necessity for any inquiry. The Ordinances have destroyed every safeguard against police oppression, which obtains all over India and is by no means confined to the ill-paid ranks of the Force.

"Police methods are cruel and vindictive. Men are beaten inside lock-ups ; brutal force is used in 'dispersing' resisters ( often only one, as in the case of picketing), under-trials are starved in lock-ups, and property is appropriated or destroyed. Vulgar abuse and the infliction of humiliation and violent assault are pretty common. It is difficult to understand why force should be used at all in effecting arrest of civil resisters, as it is admitted that they neither resist nor evade arrest. In any case, beating-up or *lathi*-charges, or kicks and bullying preliminary to, or instead of, arrest, is a wanton piece of brutality. One explanation to us was that such methods were more effective and cheaper than arrests. The explanation carries with it its own condemnation. Another gross abuse that appeared to be widely prevalent was the practice of allowing the police to buy, directly or indirectly, goods that had been attached or confiscated.

"JAILS.......We had great difficulty in obtaining permission to see jails, and had to take refusals in several cases. The total number of jails that the Delegation saw is eight. We have, however, collected evidence from ex-prisoners in different parts of the country. We have no doubt in our mind that ill-treatment of political prisoners is widely prevalent. Even the jail code is not observed by

the officials, who impose several penalties for the same jail offence, though the code allows only one at a time. Solitary confinements, different kinds of fetters, flogging, unofficial beating and kicks, the oil mill, and humiliating treatment are among the methods which jail authorities use against political prisoners. The majority of the prisoners are in 'C' class and treated as common criminals. Their warders are criminal. The quality of food varies from jail to jail. Some of the food we have seen is dirty, deficient and quite bad. The news recently published about beating in the Nasik Jail does not surprise us. The practice is not confined to Nasik. Rae Bareilly, which we saw, provided enough evidence that the practice of beating by jail officials was prevalent there..

"OFFICIALS....They were willing to listen to us, but their attitude was uncritical of excesses. The Ordinance mind pervades the administration. If a bureaucratic form of Government is bad, a bureaucracy ruling by Ordinances is a serious menace to the most innocent people. There are district officials who recognise that excesses are going on and some who even regret them. Even those latter, however, do little or nothing to check abuses and excesses. We think that the Ordinances are responsible for this indifference to wrong-doing which appears to have affected even the better class of officials.

"THE FUTURE...We regret that the Government persists in its mistaken view that the coercion will crush a people. The way of looking at the nationalist movement as an evil which must be put down, of demanding a surrender from Mahatma Gandhi and of excluding from Government discussions any one who is likely to disturb Government plans, is bound to fail. It is a tragedy that the Viceroy's Government is by its policy blocking every avenue to real peace. The refusal to allow Maulana Shaukat Ali to interview Gandhi in prison is an act of belligerency against

Indian nationalism which will not allow any bridge to be built across the present gulf. It is enforcing a blockade on Indian nationalism. In the face of such a policy it is little wonder that no Indian trusts British bonafides or believes in declarations of good intentions.

"We are leaving an India which has seen ten months of Ordinance rule. The Ordinances were originally meant for three months, and now the Government finds it necessary to give them statutory permanence. No better proof of their failure is required. Ordinances have only produced more of them and more discontent. The volume of resentment and discontent—however expressed—has grown. The sufferings of the common people have been great, but they have borne them with a courage and endurance which has stood the test of savage repression."[105]

### E. THE REIGN OF TERROR IN 1932

The one outstanding feature of the suppression of Civil Disobedience movement in 1932 was the creation of a veritable reign of terror, where any conception of rule by law and administration by civilized methods of modern age was conspicuous by its absence. The British rulers in India again sank to the level of those barbarous tyrants of the Medieval Age, annals of whose brutality fill the mind of a modern reader with unspeakable horror and whose modern parallel in Europe is only to be found in the atrocities of Hitler and his associates in Germany. Forunately for the historian, such an extreme condemnation of a nation, which justly occupies a high place in modern world, is fully supported in the present instance by the greatest Englishman now living, namely, Bertrand Russell, who wrote a Preface to the Report of the Delegation of the India League. This Preface is a severe indictment of the British rule in India in 1932, and should be read and re-read by every Englishman who wants to know its real nature and has any regard for truth and justice. The view of Bertrand Russell will be sufficiently clear

from the following passage : "There has been no lack of interests in the misdeeds of the Nazis in Germany, they have been fully reported in the Press, and have been commented on with self-righteous indignation. Few people in England realise that misdeeds *quite as serious* are *being perpetrated* by the British in India."[106]

The repressive action of the Government falls broadly under two classes. The first is a series of Ordinances which practically suspended all the normal laws safeguarding the life, property, and personal liberty of the Indians, and placed them under the regime of executive orders. The most important among these were (1) Bengal Emergency Powers (Supplementary) Ordinance of 2nd January, 1932 ; (2-4) Emergency Powers, Unlawful Instigation, and Prevention of Molestation and Boycotting Ordinances, all passed on 4th January, 1932 ; (5-6) Amending Ordinances Nos, 7 and 8 of 1932 ; (7) Special Powers Ordinance of 1932 ; (8-10) Three Bengal Emergency Powers Ordinances, Nos. 9, 11 and 12 of 1932, passed respectively on 28th May, 30th June, and 20th July, 1932.

The second class comprises the actual measures taken against individuals, groups and organisations in order to put down Civil Disobedience.

The Report refers to the ten Ordinances which were in force at the time the Delegation visited India. After describing briefly their provisions and the judgements in courts, the Delegation observes : "It would appear not merely from what actually goes on in India, but from the decisions of courts that the rights that the Indian subject enjoys are in fact determined by the acts of "competent" authorities in India, in which category would come all executive orders and Acts" (p. 32)." As against executive authority and "suspicion" and orders of the "Local Government" the subject has no rights in India.

The Delegation sums up the position created by the

Ordinances as follows :

"In 1932 the Ordinances and now the Acts recently passed deprive the Indian people of the rights of personal freedom and safeguards which, most British pecple believe, exist under British law everywhere."

"Martial Law conditions obtain now to the extent that there is : (a) Suspension of ordinary law ; (b) The substitution of executive discretion for law (in fact) ; (c) The use of soldiers for maintaining order ; (d) The use of armed police as a normal practice ; (e) The discretionary rule of the executive functioning in the main through the police ( but not the military ) ; (f) Billeting, punitive fines and commandeering of supplies ; (g) Curfew ; (h) The power to stop and search any person suspected of carrying arms or information ; (i) Blockading of areas (villages) ; (j) Control of information about movements of police and military ; (k) Control of the movements of individuals and sometimes of sections of the population by means of passports, etc. ( even within a province ) ; (l) Special tribunals and procedure displacing and barring judicial processes and the normal system and ideas of Criminal Jurisprudence ; (m) Quartering of troops on peasant villages ; (n) Firing by sentries on suspects and villagers who are alleged to fail to answer a challenge ; (o) Mass intimidation by the display of armed force in villages ; (p) Indemnity for official acts, civil and military, which is given in advance, not after, as even in martial law". (pp. 56-59).

Regarding the measures taken and the methods adopted by the Government the Report gives the following list.

(1) Declaring illegal disapproved organizations (not merely Congress)

(2) Confiscation of funds of Congress and other disapproved organisations.

(3) Control and right of examination of accounts of those likely to subscribe to any Congress or to allied activities.

(4) Arrest and imprisonment of leaders, national, provincial or local (right down to the village leaders), in the first few weeks of the Ordinance.

(5) Use of excessive force in dispersal of assemblies, ill-treatment in lock-ups and gaols.

(6) Intimidation of villages, crowds, etc.

(7) Mass punishments, punitive impositions, victimisation of neighbours, relatives, etc.

(8) Confiscation of lands, cattle, utensils and personal belongings.

(9) Ill-treatment of women and children.

(10) Police and executive action and severe penalties for technical breaches of the law.

(11) Illegal police and executive action against flag-hoisting, use of handspun, closing of shops, processions, etc.[107]

(12) Censorship of the press, interception of correspondence, and interference with travel, etc.

(13) Imprisonment after summary trials or without trials.

(14) Searches, with or without warrant.

(15) Prohibition of meetings, or assemblies of more than five persons, and surveillance over every kind of meeting.

(16) Beating of pickets and volunteers.

(17) "Parole" orders (cat and mouse procedure).[108]

(18) Externment and internment at executive discretion.

(19) Marching of troops through villages ("showing the flag").

(20) Police surveillance on an unprecedented scale.

(21) Destruction of property and closing down of

social service and similar institutions. (pp. 142-44).

The Report then adds concrete cases under each of the above heads, with full details. It is a voluminous document, and only a brief summary must suffice.

1. TREATMENT OF WOMEN RESISTERS (Item no. 9),

"The worst cases of ill-treatment of women and children have, like most of the excesses and atrocities, occurred in the villages and inside the prisons...In many instances, of which we have the facts, the women were savagely set upon, beaten or insulted by the police with the object of preventing them from participating or to frighten them and others from such activities. In the many statements made to us or sent to us, complaints of foul and filthy language and threats of dishonour, either expressed or but thinly veiled, are made against all ranks of police officer." Ill-treatment and excess include :

(1). Taking women resisters on police lorries and leaving them far away in lonely places.

(2). Actual beating and threats of violence.

(3). Abuse, indecent suggestions and insults.

(4). Compulsion to travel (as prisoners) in male custody.

(5). Rape and indecent assault, etc.

"The extent to which ill-treatment of women has occurred has varied from province to province." 'Bengal villages had the worst record and in Calcutta itself the 'beating of women' was done by the European Sergeants.'

*Caning of Women.*

"The Delegation arrived at Siddapur, Bombay Presidency (Kanarese area) on September 1st, 1932. The officials and the police whom we met assured us that all that appeared in Congress bulletins was untrue. Policemen never seized stocks of foodstuffs, grain or funds as alleged by Congress, and in no case were women beaten.

"While we were with the Mamlatdar and Circle Inspector of Police, shouts and cries were heard in the streets below. An old woman approached us and spoke in Kanarese. This was interpreted to us. She said that many women had been arrested and among them was her daughter, who had been beaten by the police. The Inspector and the Mamlatdar were unable to give any explanation. The latter asked us to go with him to the police compound and see the prisoners. Squatting on the verandah were fifteen women and two girls, the latter aged seven and nine. The Sub-Inspector who had been with us at the beginning was now here and was walking up and down before the women and looking at them fiercely.

The Women's Story :

"They had come into the town half-an-hour after the Delegation's arrival. They were determined to make a demonstration. A crowd had followed them ; the shouting we heard in the bungalow was the shouting of the people. The Sub-Inspector and his police dispersed the crowd, arrested the seventeen women who had come from outlying villages, and had caned them on the way to the police station. They made no resistance and were non-violent, and yet they were struck from behind by the police as they were marched off.

*Injuries*

"On the right shoulder of one was plainly visible a recently caused stripe; another had a contusion on the head; a third showed a mark on the arm....

*Official Admission*

"We inquired if they were arrested. The reply was : "They are not arrested, Sir, they are only detained. They will be released tonight."[109]

"On being further pressed for the reason for beating the women, the magistrate said : "Others must be shown

that they cant do this sort of thing. They will be released and no harm will come to them."

"While the discussion was going on the women protested against the Sub-Inspector (who had done the beating), and he shot out, "You will get worse than this." The women defied him to do his worst.

"We took up the case with the Circle Inspector at the bungalow, later, and he denied knowledge of the facts of the case, but warned us that he knew of a case in which complaints had been made to Mr. Clee, Hcme Secretary to the Bombay Government, and in this case it was found that one woman had beaten all her arrested companions in order to make out that the police beat women.[110]

"We subsequently learned that the women were released at dark that night, when it was raining very heavily. No food was given them and they were sent out of the town to walk many miles back to their villages."

*A Hospital Case*

"We took a statement concerning Mani Devi Temmana of the village Vasare, Ankola. She, a widow of about forty, refused to vacate her house, which had been attached under the law for non-payment of land revenue. The head constable entered the house and beat the woman with his shoes until she was unconscious. She was then dragged out of the house and left in the field. Her neighbours picked her up and took her to Ankola in an unconscious condition. She was admitted to the public hospital for treatment. The incident took place ten or twelve days prior to our visit."

*Policeman in a Ladies Compartment*

'Miss. P. Kameswari Amma, B.A., a young lady graduate of the Queen Mary's College, Madras, was one of our hosts at Rajahmundry. Among other incidents she told us about a constable forcing himself into a second-class

ladies' compartment on a train. Mr. Abdul Hameed Khan, M. L. C., interrogated the Government of Madras in the Legislature on this matter, and the Home Member replied that the Government had found the allegation untrue. Miss Kameswari then wrote to the Home Member, giving him all the facts. No attempt was made to obtain any information from her, who was an aggrieved party, and on whose behalf the matter had been raised in the Council. This is one of those cases which, in our opinion, make Government "investigations" and denials unconvincing. We know the party concerned in the case, and have not the slightest hesitation in believing her version, which she has published and the Government has merely ignored. The police knew her as a Congress woman, and indeed she had once been beaten by the police.'

*Mrs. Nehru (mother of Jawaharlal) beaten*

'Mrs. Motilal Nehru, the widow of the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, was witnessing a Congress demonstration in Purshottamdas Park, Allahabad, on the 8th April, 1932. She was pushed off her chair and fell down. She was beaten with *lathis* on her body and on her head. She was wounded on the head and was bleeding and fainted.'

*Molestation*

"We have in our possession copies of signed statements of many women victims of Police Raj. Some of the statements from Bengal and Gujarat refer to cases of attempt at or committal of rape on women by police.

"Mr. Neogy, M. L. A., referred to another form of terrorisation of women which, he said, obtained in his district. Our information, gathered in the different Provinces, is that the alleged method was widely used in other parts of India as well, particularly in Gujarat and Madras.

"Mr. Neogy stated that ladies were arrested, taken into custody, then taken some miles away from their

homes or places of arrest to island Chars. Mr. Neogy explained that 'there are small islands thrown up in the middle of the rivers of Eastern Bengal, and these Chars are in many cases uninhabited and full of jungle. The ladies are left in these places at dead of night.' Mr. Neogy also stated that he had with him several statements from persons who had been treated in this fashion."

## 2. THE BENARES WOMEN CASE

In created a great sensation, and as it is a typical instance of Government attitude in such cases it may be quoted at some length.

A number of women were alleged to be beaten by the police, but the Government denied it. "A public meeting to protest against this incident was held in Benares, presided over by the Pundit Malaviya. The meeting demanded a public inquiry."

*Officials Disagree.*

"A magisterial inquiry had already been ordered by the District Magistrate, and the Deputy Magistrate, who made the preliminary inquiry under his instructions,

(1) examined all the eight women in the case ;

(2) had four of them examined by a lady doctor ;

(3) held an identification parade of 100 constables ;

(4) examined the constables against whom the charges were made.

"After recording further evidence, the Deputy Magistrate "found that the police were undoubtedly guilty." The result was communicated to the District Magistrate. Five constables were suspended and their prosecutions ordered. The District Magistrate himself tried the case. The District Magistrate rejected the sworn statements of the eight women and accepted that of the accused police constables and acquitted them.

*An Insinuation*

"In his reply in the House of Commons the Secretary of State said that.

(1) The case was a malicious concoction.

(2) That the preliminary inquiry was worthless.

(3) That the women were "not members of respectable families, but Hindu widows who had left the protection of their husbands' families and had no visible means of support."

"The insinuation in the third item is one which attempts to di scredit the women's story by reflections on their characters. That the Secretary of State should have chosen to make such a statement against those who have not the access ro the publicity that a Minister of the Crown has, is regrettable.

*Our Testimony*

"We examined one of those women, Bagala Devi, while we were in Benaras. Whatever may be the facts of the case itself, we should like to place on record our view that the insinuation in the official statement to which we have referred is wholly unfounded. The lady is a widow, aggd 22, and stays with her mother and brother. Her father was a physician. She is a Brahman. Her husband owned a little property in Jessore and she still receives some support from her husband's brothers. The suggestion contained in the official statement is as untrue as it is wicked.

*Official Allegation on Oath.*

"The District Magistrate says of another of the women : "Kulada Devi is an unattached woman, by trade a maidservant. She varied this by being the kept woman of a Bengali for a year."

"The lady was in jail, and we could not meet her. The statement taken by Pandit Malaviya from Banamali Das,

who is the alleged paramour, says :

"Kulada-Ma (Mother Kulada) is a respectable Brahmin widow. She is about fifty years old. I am thirty, and married and have two children. For the last eight years I have known Kulada-Ma. She has always treated me as a son and I have treated her as a mother. The suggestion that there has been any improper relation between me and Kulada-Ma is a wicked lie."

"Kulada Devi was a Brahmin cook, who in India is rather different from a maid-servant, as she is described by the District Magistrate, who is a British official. He cannot be expected to know these differences.

*Medical Evidence.*

"The Secretary of State further asserted that he felt sure that the victims were medically examined. One of the doctors who made the examination was never called to give evidence, and the other, Dr. Thungamma, was not examined on certain points, and the inference drawn from her testimony is unwarranted.

"Kulada Devi stated in court that she had been examined by Dr. Amarnath, a well-known practitioner in Benaras, but he was not called. Pundit Malaviya questioned Dr. Amarnath, who stated :

"I quite remember that a middle-aged woman, who said she was a Congress volunteer, came to my residence in the afternoon of 12th March, 1932. I remember it because she complained that she had been beaten and kicked by the police the night before. I examined her and found she had a swelling on her right thigh. It was very tender and partially discoloured. I gave her liniment to apply. She did not come to me again. About three days after that, another Congress volunteer, this time a young woman, came to my dispensary and complained of pain in her back and of fever. She also said she had been beaten by the police three or four days

earlier. I examined her and gave her two prescriptions, one for application and the other for taking internally. I find copies of the said prescriptions entered in my Mangala Pharmacy Register as Nos. 504 and 505, under date 15th March, 1932. Her name is mentioned there as Bagala Sundari Devi.

*Prosecution for Perjury.*

"Lord Winterton, M. P., inquired whether any steps were being taken to prosecute for perjury persons both in India and this country who have repeated these statements.

"Major Beaumont Thomas inquired what action was being taken against the *Aj* newspaper, which, Sir Samuel Hoare alleged, was responsible for concocting the story.

"To both questions the Secretary of State replied that he was already making inquiries.

*The Pundit's Challenge Still Open.*

"Over a year has elapsed and no prosecution has been launched. Pundit Malaviya has published affidavits, and the facts of the case, and repeated his allegations asserting that the police lied, that the whole defence is a concoction, and that the treatment of the women was revengeful and inhuman. He has also stated that the District Magistrate "unwittingly added gratuitous insult to injury." He has also referred to the viciousness of the extra-judicial system of the Ordinances.

"The Pamphlet, "The Congress Women Volunteers' Case of Benaras," is signed by Pundit Malaviya and is published by his son. No prosecution has been launched against either of them so far on account of this publication."

This case has been treated at some length because it supplies an authentic testimony to the absolutely worthless character of official statements in defence of officers charged with serious crimes against political workers in India. This denunciation applies even to the statements

of the Secretary of State—a member of the British Cabinet—and, by implication, to those of the whole hierarchy of officials in India from the Governor-General down to the Police Constables who supply (or concoct) the information.

The conduct of the Magistrate not only shows the travesty of justice in political cases which had become the normal practice in British India in those days, but also the depth of degradation to which an educated Englishman—a member of the I.C.S.—can descend in order to wreak vengeance on those whose only offence, real or supposed, was to defy the lawless laws passed by a Government which prided itself on being established by law. The demoralisation of these high British officials was rendered all the more pathetic by the absence of that spirit of chivalry and respect for women which is seldom wanting in an English gentleman, at least at home. It is hardly necessary to add that the revelations made in the Banaras case were the rule rather than exception.

*Molestation (includwg rape)*

On this the Delegation observes as follows :

"We have in our possession copies of signed statements of many women victims of Police Raj. Some of the statements from Bengal and Gujarat refer to cases of attempt at or committal of rape on women by Police. In the reports and accounts[111] which we obtained in the places we visited were included assaults on women and attempts or committal of rape. There are also instances where the aggrieved party has been before us.

"At Barhee, Monghyr District, we met a woman named Dhanma. A policeman in plain clothes entered her home on the 24th August. He took her in his arms and brought her to the yard of the house. He made indecent jokes and asked for intimacy, when she raised the alarm, and her husband, who heard the cry, fetched another policeman. A complaint was filed before the

District Superintendent of Police. He took notes of the case. The policeman was taken to the Inspector of Police.

*Allegations in The Assembly : Rape Cases.*

"On the 3rd December ( after we had left India ), Mr. S. C. Mitra, Member of the Legislative Assembly, placed in the Library a copy of a report of an investigation made on his behalf by an ex-captain, who served the Empire during the war, who visited sixteen villages. Mr. Mitra, in his speech, refers to the part of the Report[112] dealing with the oppression.

"He ( the-ex-captain ) gives instances of two women on whom rape was committed. I have here their photographs, with their statements and thumb impressions, which I place on the table of the House for the inspection of Honourable Members, as well as that of the Government. It is known that in Eastern countries chastity is so highly valued that when a woman loses her chastity she is outcasted. Therefore no woman in India will ever make a false statement that rape was committed on her. I read one of them. In the statements she says her name is Kusum Kumari Mondal. On the 15th September, on Thursday night, she was sleeping with her husband. At about midnight a contingent of police came and took away her husband and all the male members of the adjoining house. Some time after, her brother-in-law alone returned. Afraid to live alone, she went to her brother-in-law's house. She was in bed with her sister-in-law and other female members. A Pathan policeman came and took away her brother-in-law. That policeman came back and with the help of a torchlight picked Kusum up and forcibly dragged her to her house and beat her; when she screamed, he gagged her and committed rape on her. Her thumb impression and statements are laid on the table of the House.

"Another case of rape is that of Sushila Bala Pradhari, of Sutahata. I place also her statement with thumb impression on the table of the House. To save herself from the police she took shelter in the house of another woman, Puti, a neighbour, who was not assessed with any punitive tax because she was too poor. The police knocked at the door and asked if there were any volunteers in the house and wanted to see the house and personally satisfy themselves. They opened the door. Instead of looking for volunteers, they closed the door and forcibly thrust Janaki and the other female into another room. Then she was threatened and raped. These are the statements of the women and there are their thumb impressions also. I place them on the table of the House so that Honourable Members can see them if they want to.

"There are six other statements of Khemankari Barnek, Girivala Roy, Bilashi, Parul Bibi, Bishnu Maiti and Saraswathi Pal, who definitely allage that attempts were made to outrage their modesty. I shall not go into details...."

II. THE USE OF EXCESSIVE FORCE

"The use of force against the subject, except when it is a legal punishment, can be justified only on grounds of necessity and expediency. It should be the last and not the first resort. It should follow warnings and, in the case of assemblies, commands to disperse. It becomes even less justified when it is realised :

(1) That Civil Disobedience volunteers do not evade or resist, and to carry out the requirements of the Ordinances and the duties of the police as generally understood, their arrest is all that is required.

(2) That volunteers are beaten even (a) after they attempt to run away, (b) after they have been arrested, (c) when they take all the beating without retaliation, (d) after they fall semi-conscious or are otherwise on the ground; and (e) when the victims include women.

(3). That the beating is accompanied by vile abuse, drenching with coloured water, dragging along the roads and the infliction of other injuries.

(4). That the victims of the beating are not the volunteers alone but also innocent sight-seers, who are merely members of the general public.

(5). That 'dispersal' in this manner is not merely of 'assemblies' but of individuals. The police 'disperse' individual pickets, who cannot by any stretching of the law be called a gathering tending to create a mob riot.

Each of theae five assertions is based on our experience, and the admissions made in the Legislatures by Government spokesmen. We shall give here a few samples not necessarily of the worst or extraordinary cases of instances in illustration of each of the five categories mentioned here"(pp. 168 ff.).

According to the Delegation Report the Madras Government instructed the Police not to beat the volunteers while the members of the Delegation were present at the scene. Actually beating was stopped as soon as they appeared. Two instances are cited. "In Calicut, however, the stopping of the procession was followed instantly by a shower of lathi blows on the volunteers on the left front of the procession. They immediately squatted on the road ; a few more blows followed. In the meanwhile the police noticed that the crowd which gathered in the buildings on either side of the road was looking away from the procession. We had reached the spot from the opposite direction and had been noticed. We saw no more beating. This incident shows the police method and the lack of any justification of necessity. The arrests did not require force ; at the same time we saw enough to verify for ourselves the widespread allegations against the police."

At Rochesan in Gujarat, the members of the Delegation reached before morning and hid themselves on the

terraces of a house. What followed is thus described: "The procession consisted mainly of women, the total number being perhaps about thirty or forty. Policemen with full-sized lathis met the procession near our house and the procession stopped. We witnessed the most savage beating that we had seen till then. The men and women squatted down. Policemen swung their five-foot lathis with both hands and delivered blows on the heads and shoulders. One of the victims was an old woman, another whose statement we took afterwards. It was a ruthless performance, savage in the fury with which the police delivered the blows." A few mote extracts may be quoted at random, just to indicate the nature of the police assault on picketers. "The pickets were not arrested in the places we visited. They were dragged along the road and blows with fists were delivered on their bodies by the constables. In one of the places we saw a Sub-Inspector directing the operations. The constables and Sub-Inspector were shouting most of the time and we understood from our friends that they were abusing the crowd and the pickets in the filthiest language."

"In one case four Brahman boys and four fisher youths picketed a toddy shop and when they refused to move they were beaten by the police and fell senseless. Water was then poured on them to revive them and afterwards, it is alleged, they were again beaten. This heartless conduct so incensed the fishermen that they wrested the lathis from the hands of the police and beat them to save the boys 'from being killed.'

"P.L.N.K. Chettiar, Ramnad district, a banker worth about two lakhs of rupees, was present at an open-air meeting on the 9th January, 1932. The Police Inspector said they should not crowd there. Mr. Chettiar moved when a policeman beat him with a lathi and fractured his knee. He fell. Someone in the crowd carried him

out. He was taken to a doctor, who said that the leg must be amputated. He insisted on seeing his own doctor, whose certificate we refer to above. Mr. Chettiar will never be able to bend his knee."

"The Delegation witnessed a Congress procession on the 11th September, 1932, at Burrabazar. It was stopped and the processionists were set upon by the police with lathis.... The demonstrators were mainly students. We saw no signs or tendencies to violence or resistance. No stones were thrown at the police, there was no obstruction of traffic and no insulting behaviour. A Congress flag was carried. The procession was soon surrounded by police constables. British sergeants then 'charged' the Congress volunteers, which is the name apparently given to the merciless beating with lathis which we witnessed. Those who dispersed were chased by the sergeants and beaten. The sergeants then proceeded to deal in the same way with members of the crowd, chasing and beating them. One boy was arrested, and the police appeared to have captured some Congress flags."

"We saw the results of lathi blows on children, and some quite savage beating. The statements that we received and took in different places contain quite a number of instances of loathsome horrors, some of them unprintable. We propose to quote here one or two cases in which we saw the victims ourselves. On our return from Sylhet to Chittagong, a party of people came to see us on the steam launch. Among them was a frail little girl aged about twelve. We saw on her head scars of wounds inflicted by the lathis and on her back some marks of savage beating. On a child of such tender years, whose crime appears to have been that she was distributing handbills, such cruelty may without any apology be classed as gruesome. We cross-examined the child and we are convinced in our minds that the child was savagely beaten."

*Hair Set On Fire.*

"At Madura we met a Dhobie (washerman). He wore khaddar and picketed. He was beaten severely and then taken to the house of the Police Inspector, who was an Indian. He was again beaten, then kerosene oil was poured on his hair and set alight." The rest of the story may be said in the words of the man himself. "The Circle Inspector's wife cried out in horrified protest. A constable put out the fire with his hands. There were burns all over my head. The Circle Inspector then beat me with a ruler with one hand and a lathi in the other on the elbow, shoulder, wrist, knee-cap and thigh, and on my back and fingers. My hands were bleeding. I had five wounds on the head, six or seven on my left arm, seventeen on my right arm, displacement of three finger nails of the left hand....At the end the Circle Inspector asked me whether I had tasted Swaraj and asked me to apologise, and I was beaten again. The Circle Inspector's wife pleaded for mercy for me. The Circle Inspector became more angry and flung the lathi and rule at his wife."

'Four young boys, aged 7, 10, 12 and 16, were beaten, kicked and slapped for the alleged offence of their eldest brother, who was absent. The Police tied their legs with ropes and hanged them by their feet from the roof and beat them.'

At Mardan, when the Delegation was taking down statements from the people, a crowd gathered in the adjacent lane. They behaved in a quite orderly manner and dispersed at the request of the Delegation who then resumed taking notes. What followed is thus described :

"About half-an-hour afterwards we looked out through the window out of curiosity. We saw in the lane, in front of the Hujra, a party of constables, armed with lathis and rifles, lined up. When we returned to our

work of taking statements, we suggested that those who had already spoken to us or had no business should leave, as it was rather close and warm. Some of the men inside then proceeded to leave. In a minute or so there was noise downstairs, and we looked through the window. We saw the party of constables pushing the people who were leaving the place back into the Hujra and belabouring them violently with their full-sized lathis and hitting men with rifle butts. A number were savagely beaten with the lathis swung against their heads and bodies. An old man who was going away had his turban snatched, his hands tied up with it and his head subjected to rain of lathi blows. We also noticed that the constables pounded people on their chests with the stout ends of the lathis with great violence. Some of the men who were thus pushed back came upstairs, and we saw their injuries. In addition to contusions and bleedings, we noticed that the pounding on the chest had removed thick layers of skin and tissue.

### III. FIRING ON CROWDS

"The instances to which we are about to refer relate to cases where police have opened fire on crowds. In some cases stone-throwing at the police has been alleged. In no instance is there evidence of an actual riot which had to be quelled.

"In the course of a reply to a question by Sardar Santa Singh, M. L. A., about the number of times the Police or Military had to use force in dispersing unlawful assemblies in 1932, Mr. Haig, the Home Member, gave the following figures of those killed and wounded: Killed. 80, Wounded...319. The figures in the schedule obviously refer to casualties on account of firing, since total wounded by other forms of police action are many times the total given."

The Delegation refers to a number of cases of firing

on village people either by police, military police, or troops.:

"At Hashanabad a very large meeting of peasants was held on the 14th February, 1932. It was an illegal meeting, as it had been prohibited under Section 144. The police arrived and declared the meeting unlawful and ordered the people to disperse. The order was not obeyed and the police opened fire, killing two and wounding many others. Three of the wounded died in hospital later.

"Another village gathering on which the police opened fire was at Tamluk, in Midnapore District, Bengal, where numbers of village men and women had assembled to make salt as part of the Civil Disobedience programme. The police declared the assembly unlawful and made a lathi charge. The assembly did not disperse and they opened fire. (Press report 1-4-32).

"A third instance is that of an incident in Muzaffarpur. The official version is that a determined attack was made on the Sheohar Thana, in the Sitamarhi Sub-Division, on the 28th February, 1932, by a crowd of 7,000, armed with brickbats and lathis. An officer and two men of the Gurkha Military Police were alleged to have been injured by brickbats. The crowd was dispersed by firing, killing four and injuring eight persons. These are the official figures.

"The unofficial version is that several thousand persons marched towards the Thana to hoist the Congress flag over the building, where the authorities, who had notice of the intended demonstration, had posted soldiers, and the Deputy-Magistrate was present to watch the situation. Crowds gathered; the police snatched the flags from the volunteers who tried to hoist it and the onlookers threw some brickbats, when a soldier beat a volunteer with the butt end of a rifle. Of those killed the youngest was twelve and the oldest thirty."

*Cases in towns and cities.*

"In Bombay, according to Mr. Haig's statement, thirty-four persons had been killed and ninety-one injured as a result of firing. In Allahabad the police dispersed a procession on the 9th April by opening fire. They were men and women who had squatted on the road when prohibited by the police from proceeding with the procession. It was reported that brickbats had been thrown at the police by members of the crowd. Several rounds were fired."

*Government Figures Challenged.*

"At Tehatta, in Bengal, a conference of the Nadia Distirct Congress Committee had been called on the 19th June, 1932. Police interfered with the arrival of delegates, refusing to allow the train to stop and prohibiting ferry boats from plying. Despite this, about four or five thousand people, according to police reports (ten to twelve thousand according to Congress and local estimates), gathered at Tehatta, a country place, whose normal population is 1,200 or so. Armed police were brought in, though Nadia is a district of Bengal where the violence party has no following. The crowd was non-violent; police broke up the gathering with lathis, bayonets and the butts of rifles. The crowd regathered in another place. The police now opened fire and wounded about twenty-five people and killed Satish Sardar. Mr. Haig's figures are one killed and three wounded.

"Satish Sardar was not a Congressman but a spectator. He leaves a widow and five children between the ages of one and twelve. A number of people, including the wounded, were later on tried and sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment each. During the trial the police alleged that brickbats were thrown at them, but no independent witnesses were called. There was no inquiry[113] into the firing and no compensation either for the widow

and children of Satish Sardar or to any of the wounded. A woman, Nital Chand Biswas, who received a bayonet wound in the hand on this occasion was acquitted at the trial. She states that while she was picketing the Union Court, one of the armed police grabbed her by the throat and a rifle was pointed at her. She was threatened with instant death.[114]

"We also interviewed a Moslem lad, Fazalulla, who had been shot through the thigh. He had nothing whatever to do with the rioting, but had come into Tehatta to buy oilcakes for his bullocks;"

*No Inquiry*

"The practice that obtains in India, of not ordering an inquiry even after people are killed as a result of firing by the Police or the Military, coupled with the visiting of penalties on the publication of accounts in newspapers, justifies our giving here some of the information that we collected, side by side with the official version. Ordinance rule appeared obviously more arbitrary than even a Martial Law regime when Police, Military and District Civil Officers may shoot people dead or order firing and no inquiry is held after the incident and no compensation offered to the relatives of those killed, even when they happen to have been neutral citizens who are spectators."

## IV. RAIDS AND SEARCHES

"The Ordinance conferred on Magistrates power to issue warrants, to search premises and to seize property suspected of being used or about to be used for any purpose prejudicial to public safety."

"Raids and searches were made by the police all over India. We have the figures of the total searches in six months in 1932. Two random instances would suffice to show the extent : Contai Sub-division of Midnapore

District, 45 searches, Muzaffarpur (Bihar), 39, in approximately six months. The worst cases are in the villages."

"Mr. Neogy, a Member of the Assembly, gave an instance in the Legislative Assembly on the 2nd February, 1932. The house of Rai Bahadur G.C. Nag, a Government title-holder and pensioner, a retired Deputy-Collector, was raided one night. Mr. Nag was grossly abused by a European police officer. When he remonstrated, the officer told him, "If the Police Superintendent had come he would have beaten you." Mr. Nag's son and daughter were taken away and the lady was kept in custody without any charge and removed from place to place under male escort. The police smashed all the furniture in Mr. Nag's house. Mr. Neogy informed the Assembly that Mr. Nag had written to him about the facts."

"Mrs. Purna Devi, whom we met in Lahore, informed us that in 1930 her house was searched while her husband was in prison. The police came at 2 a.m., and as she was alone she told them she would not open the door till the morning. They then broke open the door and entered the courtyard and climbed the pillars and got into the house. She also said that such searches were common. Three or four policemen would come and turn places upside down. The police are supposed to bring ordinary citizens to witness the search. In fact, such people as they bring are men in their own pay. Arrests are often made at night."

"Mr. Abdul Matin Choudry read in the Legislative Assembly a telegram which had been sent to the Governor of Bengal by the Imam of the Jama Masjid of Chittagong.

"Grossly insulting searches of about 150 respectable Moslem houses of Alkaran in the town made Wednesday, 16th instant, on meagre information regarding absconders. Indignities caused to pardanashin ladies, some inside the houses and some dragged to considerable distance and

exposed in public street after removing the male members under arrest to another place. Some pardanashin ladies roughly handled and rudely treated in the name of searches and Moslem males beaten and some grossly insulted...."

## V. BEATINGS IN LOCK-UPS.

"Beating, or other forms of torture, in a police lock-up, which are entirely illegal, appear to have been adopted by the police in almost every province. Madras, Gujarat, Bengal and the United Provinces furnished us with instances. It is at once one of the worst forms of atrocity and the most difficult to prove. We examined at some length the cases. One was that of a barber boy, aged perhaps nineteen, who was not a volunteer. He stated to us that he went near volunteer camps and that his sympathies were with Congress people. He had in consequence refused to shave policemen in his saloon. He was taken by the police one day and severely beaten in the lock-up. We saw marks of the beating all over the lad's body. Another young man whom we met there was a Congress volunteer, who had been arrested at Quilandy (Malabar) and severely beaten and kicked by policemen with their boots. He was under treatment for several months afterwards. The police tried to extract an apology.

"Apart from these two instances on which we questioned these men and convinced ourselves, the reports of savage beatings in the lock-ups which appear to have been a special feature of the Calicut police methods, were mentioned to us by many people, mostly opponents of Congress....

"Mr. Russell, the Collector, received us in his bungalow, and our interview was most friendly. We took up the matter of the police lock-ups. He did not deny that such incidents took place, though he made no admissions. But he said that the police denied it, and since there

was no independent testimony, all he could do was to ask the District Superintendent of Police to tell his men to use authority with discretion. The interview confirmed our feelings about the police beatings in Malabar. The "evidence" that the Collector referred to would never be obtained, since in a lock-up the only people are the police and the victims.......

"Kushalbhai Vara Sabhai, aged 20, of Yorawadi, Taluka Mandavi, made a statement before us. He is almost blind; from a distance of two feet he described a watch as "a metal piece." The statement is as follows:

"In February, 1932, I was one of a party selling contraband salt. The police caught the party and took us to a police thana, beating us with lathis on the way. Four of us were separated and beaten again with lathis. I was made to sit and was kicked with heavy boots on my back. There was one European officer present. He compelled us to bend down and hold our toes; while we were doing this we were beaten on the back till the cane broke. Another cane was then brought. We were then asked to take care next time on pain of death, and driven away in different directions. I was in bed for fifteen days afterwards."

"Chunilal, of Rastampur village, Rae Bareilly District (United Provinces), arrested on the 5th March, 1932, for picketing foreign cloth, in a statement made to us said that from the street he was taken by constables to Rae Bareilly kotwali. They let him sit there and said nothing for one day. The second day at 10 o'clock the Police Sub-Inspector came and took him by the ear and asked him to apologise. He declined. The Sub-Inspector then dragged him by the tuft (of hair) and ear and knocked him against the wall, several times. "From the 5th to 11th I was given water alone, and no food." Food was sent by his people, but the police did not allow it to

be given to the man. They said that unless he apologised no food would be allowed. The Sub-Inspector came three times a day and beat him and knocked him about, with his hand and with a stick. There were four other people in the lock-up who were similarly treated."

"We were shown in many of the places that we visited medical certificates issued by qualified doctors relating to injuries inflicted by the police. We were also informed that in several places hospitals which received Government aid would not render medical assistance to the victims of police excesses."

"A Congress volunteer, Kumaraswami, aged 27, was beaten to death at Tiruppur (Madras Presidency) on the 11th January, 1932."

## VI. OTHER FORMS OF POLICE EXCESSES

"That photographs of Indian leaders, not only in shops but in private houses, were pulled down and taken away by the police, and the parties concerned either assaulted or threatened, was frequently mentioned to us in India. In the earlier part of 1932 this form of police action was widely prevalent in Madras, Gujarat and other areas. We made inquiries of a number of shopkeepers...."

### *Investigated Cases*

"The Police authorities asked the shopkeepers to withdraw all calendars bearing Mr. Gandhi's picture or that of other leaders. Otherwise they would share the fate of the tobacconist Nagindas. This latter gentleman had refused to remove Mr. Gandhi's photograph from his shop, and had been sentenced under the Ordinances to two years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine.

"On the day of our arrival at Sayan, the 31st October, 1932, three boys came to Sayan with framed portraits of Mr. Gandhi and a few Gandhi caps for sale. They were immediately arrested by the Head Constable.

We went to the police station and asked for the Head Constable and saw the three boys. We asked the officer-in-charge for particulars and he told us that he had his orders to arrest anybody selling Gandhi pictures or khaddar or white caps. He could not say under what law this was ordered, but his orders were to prevent anyone selling swadeshi."

"The ill-treatment of members of the public by the police is indicated by the views which Dr. Hogg, the British missionary, who is the Principal of the Madras Christian College, communicated to us, and we understand, to persons in authority. He says : "Government desires, and with all my heart I desire, that Indian youth shall not be seduced into sympathy with revolutionary methods, and yet Government is taking the most direct route to this undesired result, by the spectacle which lathi charges and beatings daily provided.

"It is impossible to employ police in this kind of work without their frequently overstepping intended limits and committing unauthorised excesses. And the combined effect of the horror I know of people feeling at brutalities witnessed, of the indignation at the lathi charges on inoffensive bystanders, of the resentment at the indignity of the coloured water douche and at the inhumanity of prohibiting immediate succour to the injured, is rapidly alienating persons whose habitual disposition has been strongly loyal.'

"Dr. Hogg also gives an instance of what happens in Northern India, as told him by an Indian friend, a University lecturer :

"As I write this six of our dear boys are lying in our hospital, wounded in to-day's firing. Their fault, if it was a fault, was that they went to witness, but not to partake in, a meeting which turned out to be another Black Hole and Slaughter of the Innocents......Our doctor

saw seven lying dead, one being a lady and another a child...Organised terrorism like this may quell the present movement, but it will embitter and unite the nation... The Civilians must be mad if they fancy that we will be thankful for a reform which is to be granted only after our self-respect is broken in this brutal fashion."

*Specific Instances.*

"About the excesses committed by the police on the public, a number of signatories, including 24 lawyers, of Madura, one doctor, two first-class Hon. Magistrates, two merchants, and one member of the Madura District Board, in their memorandum, state:

"For the past five days Madura is passing through a reign of horror during nights. Parties of Reserve Policemen in their uniforms go about the streets at night after 9 p.m. and molest all and sundry they can lay hands on.

"From the statements given by some of the victims it appears:

(a) That innocent pedestrians have been beaten and some of them robbed by the Reserve Police party.

(b) That shopkeepers have been plundered and articles in the shops broken and otherwise damaged.

(c) That during the assault on the victims, if these latter happen to wear khaddar clothes, such khaddar clothes have been slipped from them and the victims have been left in the streets stark naked. Such khaddar clothes taken away from the victims have been burnt by the police at the junction of streets and several other public places.

(d) Instances have been reported of cases when people going in *jutkas* (horse carriages) have been plundered, beaten, and let off.

(e) On the night of 29.4.32 the son of Soyaj Aiyar, an Advocate, was severely beaten with lathis,

by the Reserve Police, while he was standing innocently in front of a house.

(f) There have been instances where very respectable people have been chased by the Reserve Police and escaped beating only by taking refuge in the nearest house.

(g) Poeple are afraid of sleeping on pials (verandah) because of the incidents that are happening. Business is paralysed and shops are compelled to close much earlier than usual.

"Such acts of uncontrolled police licence are bound to react on the temper of the people and incidentally on the morale and discipline of the Reserve Police themselves.

It is therefore prayed that an impartial inquiry be held into the conduct of the Reserve Police from 25.4.32."

"The District Magistrate, Mr. Hall, sent for the signatory first on the list, and asked him if he knew anything personally of these happenings. He said he had taken statements on oath and could produce them. Copies of the statements were sent to the District Magistrate along with the memorial.

"It was reported in the press in May (1932) that an official inquiry would be held. We were in Madura in August, 1932. Nothing further had happened till then.

"We have in our possession copies of eight statements taken on oath relating to this memorial, and the victims include petty shopkeepers, watchmen, bank clerks, and merchants."

*Official Denials*

"The allegations of atrocities made by public men have often been denied or explained away by official

departments or spokesmen in the Legislatures or in press communiques. In no case has a public inquiry been instituted, and when, as in the case of the firing at Hijli Detenue Camp, an official committee has found fault with the official side, no action has been taken."

*A Bezwada Memorial.*

"Twenty lawyers of the Bezwada Bar sent a memorial to the Madras Government and members of the Legislative Council concering "police excesses in Bezwada" and other villages in the District. They state that their memorial deals not with "vague allegations, but particulars with dates and names whose authenticity can easily be verified." They also state that the "cases are only illustrative, not exhaustive," and appeal for an "open and public inquiry."

*The Official Denial.*

"Questions were asked about some of these cases in the Madras Legislative Council in July. The Government at first denied knowledge, the usual answer, "No information," being returned. Questions were repeated and particulars of beatings, injuries and excesses mentioned, on succeeding days, and in each case the Government denied knowledge. The Home Member added that the "Government have no reason to suppose that the volunteers were beaten in the manner indicated," the reason for the supposition being that "it has not been brought to our notice."

"The demand for the public inquiry was now supported in a public statement issued by three members of the Legislature from the Telugu area, who stated that there was strong public feeling about these incidents and urged the Government to act.

"The memorial was submitted on the 14th July, 1932; the questions to which we have referred were asked on the 4th August and subsequent days. On the 17th August the Government issued a press communique in which the

allegations were dismissed as untrustworthy, and it was announced that the Government "do not propose to order any general inquiry into the allegations contained in the memorial."

"From a perusal of the papers relating to these requests for inquiry, the procedure adopted by the Government appears to be to plead "no information" when questions are asked in the Legislatures soon after the incident and suggest that there has been no time to inquire, and when a memorial with particulars is submitted at a later date to dismiss the whole affair as being a "belated" complaint.

## VII. CONDITIONS IN JAIL.

"The food that is prescribed under the rule is coarse and unsuited to the average prisoner even of the habitual criminal class."

### *The Facts.*

"In actual fact the flour contains sand and dirt, and the *chapathis* (bread) made out of it are unfit for normal human consumption. The food is often half-cooked, to make it weigh more. The grain troughs, we are told by prisoners, were dirty. The eating and cooking utensils we saw in Peshawar made one sick to look at, They were dirty in the extreme. Though jail gardens grow excellent vegetables, it is a well-known fact that these find their way to markets and supply the jail officials. The food of the Class C. prisoner is mostly leaves and stalk. We were told this by men in jail, as at Rae Bareilly, and by almost every prisoner we met."

### *Complaints.*

"Complaints led not to rectification of evils, but to punishments which included solitary confinement and fetters, beating and kicks. Worms and insects in grain and vegetables served to the prisoners are common. The complaint that the supply of drinking water was in-

sufficient was common to almost every province. For washing purposes the supply is even worse and the children suffered the hardship most.[115] At Benares Mrs. Usha Malaviya, who was a Class A. prisoner, complained to the jail authorities about the hardship suffered by the women in Class C. One of the complaints was that there was insufficient supply of drinking water in the heat of the Benares summer. The result was that the women concerned were taken away and Mrs. Malaviya, in fact, became a solitary prisoner. In some jails, the water was foul and cases of typhoid were reported. Devadas Gandhi, one of the sons of the Mahatma, was victim of typhoid at one time while in jail.

*Children.*

"There are two distinct problems concerning the juvenile inmates of the prison. First, there are those in various prisons in India sentenced to rigorous imprisonment (Hard Labour) for Civil Disobedience offences under the Ordinances. The sentences vary from six months to a year and the age from 9 to 16 years. Their aggregate number is not large compared to the others, but detention of these in prison, specially under the conditions obtaining in Indian jails, is nothing short of a crime. Some of these young offenders are flogged or whipped; they also do the labour of adults. Their youth makes them the victims of foul and abusive language and, we were told, of worse forms of tyranny. These boys were often unable to do the prescribed amount of labour and beaten in consequence. The jail Manual provides that juveniles shall not be kept along with adults, but our information about the prisons in the United Provinces is that the juveniles were kept along with habitual adult criminals.

*Infants.*

"Then there is the problem of infants living in jails

with their mothers. The jail rules provide that mothers may keep their children with them if the children are under six years of age. We were informed that in the case of Civil Disobedience women prisoners of Class C. this rule was broken. The mothers were put on to hard labour and the children isolated in another barrack during the period. Even the dietary as prescribed in the Manual, namely, half the adult prisoner's coarse food, is entirely unsuitable for infants. Further, there were no facilities for boiling the milk supplied or obtained, which was not merely adulterated, but often dirty. We were told of the hardships of children by ex-women prisoners in the United Provinces and the Bombay Presidency, one of these a mother, a schoolmistress, who had her baby under a year with her while in prison.

"These children are innocent of any crime or offence whatever, and the infliction of hardship and cruelty on them in their tender years should rouse the indignation and protests of all decent-minded people."

*Women Prisoners.*

"We were informed by women ex-prisoners that in Class C., prisoners were herded with habitual criminals and prostitutes. Many of the women Civil Disobedience prisoners are young women who have led sheltered lives, and the throwing of them into the company of the habitual criminal and the prostitute is not only against jail regulations but reprehensible."

*Transport of Prisoners.*

"Women prisoners were escorted over long journeys by policemen and head constables, without women warders, or other female company. The policemen always insisted on occupying the same third class apartment, however small, as the women prisoners......They squeezed themselves in, used the same lavatories, made

vulgar jokes and sang ribald songs, and used foul language."

"Mr. Hall, the District Magistrate, as well as the jail superintendent, had asserted that all educated women were given Class A. and B. But this we found was not true. The rice and flour supplied contained worms. The mat (for bedding) was too dirty to be used. The women were ordered to break stones. They refused."

"Bina Das Gupta, sentenced to ten months' rigorous imprisonment, stated that she was beaten in prison in June last. She was also given solitary confinement for one month. Arati Mukherjee, aged 26, it was stated to us, was beaten by a British police officer."

*Latrine ·parade*

"The term "latrine parade" was at first incomprehensible to us, but we heard about it everywhere. There are an insufficient number of latrines, and they are not kept clean. To give an instance, in Meerut Jail, our information is that the time allowed for the "latrine parade" is ten minutes for 80 prisoners, who have to use ten seats among them. During the twelve hours that the prisoners are locked in, they are not permitted to use the lavatories.

*Prison Labour*

"Hem Chandra Rassler, who was a Class C. prisoner in Chittagong Jail, in his statement made to us, said that he was put to work ten or eleven hours a day on the oil mill. It was ten hours continuously without a break. At about 11 o'clock food was given to him which had to be eaten in a few minutes while on the mill. No bath or rest, even for a few minutes, was allowed.[116] He did this work for the whole of February and uptill the 22nd March.

'At the oil mill, politicals and others who do not work are beaten by convict overseers and warders. I was not beaten, but I witnessed the beating of two young

men who fainted. They were not politicals. The beating is done with hands and with batons.' Hem Chandra was transferred to Dum Dum after six weeks at Chittagong and given Class B. He was by profession a teacher and a weaving expert with a Government Certificate."

*Mass Arrests.*

Numerous cases are cited where for a political crime, such as robbery and murder, number of people,—sometimes fifty, sixty, or even seventy,—were arrested, and released after two or three months. These were Congress workers.

*Shooting of Detenus.*

"Complaints of ill-treatment and violence by jail officials in these internment camps were made to us in Bengal. There have been cases of firing on detenues. The Bengal Government appear, from the order we quote below, to have given wide powers to prison officials :

"If any detenue under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930, disobeys or neglects to comply with any order made, direction given or condition prescribed by virtue of any rule made under Section 13 of the said Act, the authority which made the order, gave the direction or prescribed the condition may use any and every means necessary to enforce compliance with such order."

"The shooting of unarmed detenues at Hijjli in September 1931, by the armed guards of this camp and the findings of an official committee, consisting of a British official and an Indian judge, which state that the shooting was 'indiscriminate' and 'without justification' and resulted in serious injuries and two deaths, should have been sufficient reason for the Bengal Government to desist from placing such unrestricted powers as provided in the Order quoted, in the hands of prison officials."

*Women's Camps.*

"Among the (women) detenues are many women, mostly

college girls, suspected of terrorist crimes, but not proved guilty or charged with such. The condition of one of these places, the Suri Camp, will be evident from the following account of a hunger strike which appeared in the Press. Even the local officials seem to agree that the conditions were unbearable. Seven young lady detenues were sent to Suri and lodged in a room 25 feet by 15 feet, part of which was used as a store and the remaining portions furnished for the detenues. The south and east sides of the room were completely blocked and the room had no windows. The heat in this part of India is excessive in the hot months. The detenues petitioned for transfer to some other jail. The Press report says that the petition was submitted in January, and the magistrate assured the prisoners that their transfer had been decided upon, and would take place about the middle of April. No order came, and about the 15th April the Superintendent asked them to wait a little more. They then asked for permission to sleep on the verandah, as it was very hot. This request was refused. The detenues, however, insisted on sleeping outside and the authorities called in the female warders, but the detenues refused to sleep inside. Twenty-eight male warders were then requisitioned. Fearing insults, the detenues went inside the room and started a hunger strike.

"The District Magistrate sent for the guardians of the detenues, and on their intervention the hunger strike came to an end by the authorities agreeing to extend the lock-up hour."

*Chain Gangs, Solitary Cells and Beatings.*

"R. M. Sangal, Banker of Rajasahi, stated to us : 'I was put in a solitary cell for two months and allowed out only for an hour each in the morning and evening. I was allowed no reading and given no work. I lost 9 lbs. weight

and suffered from insomnia. I was transferred from there to a cubicle 5 feet by 7 feet by 7 1/2. feet, all sides wire netting in a house of 94 such cubicles.'

"In the Peshawar jail we ourselves saw prisoners under trial who had been in jail for over a year with bar fetters.

"Debendranath Sen, a University graduate of Dacca, was sentenced to eight months in Class. C., and after being in Dacca jail for a fortnight was sent to Dum Dum jail. At Dacca he was handcuffed at night and put on "penal rice." At Dum Dum several prisoners were handcuffed and prisoners were tied to each other. There was no attempt at escape by political prisoners in that jail."

"We take the following cases from the Report of the non-official jail Committee in the United Provinces :

(1). Sewa Ram of Bareilly was seen talking to Shiva Shaukad of Muzaffarpur. He was given standing handcuffs for four days as punishment. He had to answer the calls of nature while still in standing handcuffs.

(2). Ram Dutta, of Bahampur ( Gonda jail ), was given solitary cell for not wearing jail cap. He actually remained in the cell for about a month.

(3). In April, 1932, Mata Prasad ( Gonda jail ), a lad of sixteen, was given work on the pumps. The boy got sores on his hands and asked the jailor for change of task. He was given bar fetters as punishment.

(4). Rama Tirtha went on hunger strike in February-March, 1932, as a protest against bad food, in Basti Jail, which lasted one month. He was transferred to Gonda jail in a very weak condition, but he was kept in solitary cell and put in bar fetters. He became unconscious on the 6th March. The rest of the prisoners went on hunger strike in protest and there was a lathi charge. Ram Tirtha, who at the time of the hunger strike and the lathi charges was lying in bar fetters, was tried a month later when he had recovered and sentenced to additional imprisonment

for four months for creating a disturbance in jail.

(5). Bharat Singh, 20 years, of the village of Kanta, Aligarh District, was chained at night along with twenty or so others, all under 20 years of age. During the day Bharat Singh was locked in. This is confirmed in an independent statement made by Kandhan Singh, of Ranlpan, aged 20, who says that after a few days in jail he was deprived of his blanket and chained with 25 or so others, all boys, while sleeping on the verandah, which they were compelled to do, though it was the cold season.

(6). Madan Lal Parmi, aged 26, of Menak Chouk, Aligarh, was chained with 54 others and was also deprived of blankets.

The above are random samples of punishments given in the jails and the alleged offences are mostly making complaints about conditions or of the ill-treatment of a fellow prisoner, hunger strikes or refusal to submit to some humiliation or other."

*Assault By A British Official.*

Another case is described by Mr. Neogy, thus :

"Here I have an account which was made the subject of an interpellation in the Bengal Legislative Council regarding an assault that was committed by no less a person than a European member of the Indian Civil Service, the Sub-divisional officer of the particular Sub-division where this assault took place, on a Civil Disobedience prisoner on his refusal to give the usual thumb impression. This particular man was so ill on that day that he had to be carried on a stretcher to the Court. The Sub-divisional officer, I understand, was holding his Court inside the jail premises, for the purpose of trying this offence of refusal to give the thumb impression. Now this man having been carried on a stretcher was convicted to two months' rigorous imprisonment for having refused to give his thumb impression. Having received this punishment,

this man, along with another who was not ill, was returning to their ward, when the Sùb-divisional officer called them back. Some jail sentries were also called and the Sub-divisional officer then asked them again to give their thumb impressions. But they persistently refused. At this he flew into a rage, and, snatching a baton from a police officer, struck this sick man on the head, hip and other parts of his body. The police officer and the sentries also took up the cue and made free use of whatever they could put their hands on. The Sub-divisional officer sat upon the chest of this sick man, dislocated his thumb and forefinger joint by applying force, and then his thumb impression was taken."

The other prisoner, Mr. Neogy states, was assaulted. "His hand was fractured. He was struck on the head with a baton and kicked in the stomach. Both these men became unconscious, and the sick man's wound was bleeding profusely. Hearing the tumult, the jailor rushed to the place and sounded the alarm, but on understanding the situation he stopped the alarm and tried to pacify the prisoners with the assurances that proper steps would be taken. It was found that the sick man had a deep and long wound on the forehead, apart from other marks of assault, and his fingers of both hands had been damaged, and abdomen swollen with kicks."

"The Berar representative interposed to say that in the Central Provinces similar treatment was meted out to an ex-Member of the Legislative Assembly."

*The Official Version*

"The Bengal Government's version of the case, elicited in reply to interpellation, was next quoted by Mr. Neogy, and it said :

"The prisoner refused to give his thumb impression as required under Section so-and-so of the Identification of Prisoners Act of 1920. He was informed of the fact that

the provisions of the law clearly contemplated that such impression should be taken by force, if necessary, and after every effort was made to make him give his thumb impression, he resisted the officer discharging his duty. A struggle ensued (mind you, with a man who had to be carried on a stretcher), and, in the course of the struggle, the prisoner received minor injury. The prisoner was not deliberately assaulted."

*Another Case*

"Another case is that of Mr. Dhiresh Chandra Chakravorty, M.A., editor of an English weekly in Calcutta, the *New Era*, who had been sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment for preaching the Congress programme at a meeting. Mr. Neogy described the treatment meted out to him :

"He was removed from the Munshiganj sub-jail to the Dacca Central Jail on the 27th January in a hand-cuffed state. A large number of people gathered on the roadside and greeted him with shouts of 'Bande Mataram'. At this, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, who was then at Munshiganj Thana, rushed out and assaulted Dhiresh Babu with blows on the left eye and temple. Being hand-cuffed, he could offer no resistance. The spectacles he wore were smashed to pieces. For the time he was rendered unconscious. It was most fortunate that the broken pieces of glass only scratched the lids and did not pierce into the eye, which had been narrowly saved. After this, the authorities left him without any glasses, for days together, and ultimately these had to be supplied from his home. This incident also formed the subject-matter of interpellations in the Bengal Legislative Council, and this is what the Chota Home member said :

"Yes, one blow was struck, but there was a certain amount of provocation, and the officer was totally unaware that Dhiresh Babu was handcuffed."

## VIII. NEWSPAPERS.

Between January and July, 1932, security was demanded from 109 journals and 98 printing presses in India. "The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* ( Calcutta ) had to deposit the maximum security ( Rs. 2,000 each from the Keeper of the Press and Publisher ) for publishing an article entitled "India in Travail", by Prof. S.K. George, in its issue on the 25th May. The article referred to Christian principles and non-violent resistance."

In November, 1932, the *Free Press Journal* of Bombay "had beed called on to forfeit its security of Rs. 10, 000 and to pay another Rs. 20,000 for reprinting an article which was written by Mr. Gandhi two years ago in his paper *Young India*." Cases of five other presses are referred to.

## IX. NO-TAX CAMPAIGN AND POLICE RAJ.

"The no-tax campaign was pursued on a mass scale in the Allahabad and Rai Bereilly districts of the United Provinces, in the Kaira and Surat districts of Gujarat, in the Canarese districts of the Bombay Presidency, in certain areas of Bengal, such as Contai, Midnapore, and Tamluk, in Bihar and in the North-West Frontier Province. In the rest of India, this item of the Civil Disobedience programme wrs not widely adopted, and where it obtained it was a matter of individual rather than mass disobedience.

"We visited villages in all these areas and made close investigations. The campaign was still in progress everywhere except in the United Provinces. Gujarat, Bengal, and the North-West Frontier Province had suffered the most. In the villages in these areas Government servants resigned their posts and cultivators allowed their land to be seized. The extent of the movement may be gauged from the following figures taken from a number

that we collected. In the United Provinces, in the district of Cawnpore, in one Tashil alone, 209 summonses had been issued, 298 attachments made, and 44 auctions had taken place.

"The Government measures included :

1. Proclaiming that landlord rents may be recovered as land revenue.
2. Police camps.
3. Special attachment officers.
4. Blockading of villages.
5. Prohibiting reaping of crops.

"Apart from these measures sanctioned by law, as under the Ordinances, the police terrorised the villages, and landlords took the law into their own hands and smashed up tenants' houses, and took their property with the aid of the police."

*Police Camps*

"Punitive police, for which the villagers had to pay, were stationed in many areas. Police camps were built round the crops to prevent tenants reaping their crops. In Ras we saw crops rotting in the fields. In some places, police had mowed the corn....In some areas the tenants set fire to the crop rather than allow it to be reaped by others. The police encampments, with the armed pickets, gave the place the appearance of area under occupation.

"Attachment of property, usually a revenue process, has now become a police job. The police raided the villages, beat the foremost resisters, seized livestock, fodder, foodstuff from them, pulled down parts of houses, and none of these can be questioned in a court of law even if Congress people decided to fight actions in court."

*Blockading of Villages.*

"Villages were blockaded, to round up people, and as a particularly noxious form of coercion. In the Gujarat

districts the police made a practice of blockading villages for twenty-four hours or more. It is the residential part of the village which is thus besieged, and the object is to prevent people from going out into the fields for their natural functions."

*Looting And Pillage.*

"Where punitive police are stationed, entering of houses, taking away of goods, looting and destruction take place as part of Police Raj, according to the evidence we received and the results that we saw. In the villages, mainly in Gujarat, looting has followed in the wake of tax collection."

*Houses Entered*

"We went into a large number of houses in the Gujarat villages and saw the destruction that had been wrought. Utensils and furniture had been broken up where they had not actually been taken away. In Ras and Bochasan we saw house after house, in which the huge earthen jars, in which grain is stored, were broken up. These are part of the peasant's stock, and they have been in possession of these families for generations. It was stated to us that armed police had entered and broken up things with the butt ends of their rifles, or anything else they could lay hands on. Beds, food, etc., had also been taken away in villages in Bengal, the North-West Frontier Province, and Gujarat. We have the particulars of a number of instances, some of which we give below."

"Khusalbhai Hathibhai made a statement that about 'fifty policemen, who were brought from Anand by Revenue officer Manilal Gandabhai, were posted at every corner in the village and practically all the houses were entered. They broke up water pots, big jars, and boxes, and beat people, several of whom were aged men."

"We saw the results of some of the looting and

destruction in Bhanubil, in Sylhet......The village belongs to a Zemindar, who is alleged to have increased the rent from 13 1/2 annas to Rs. 2.80. The tenants refused to pay, and the Zemindar got a decree of ejectment. Armed Gurkhas and constables, headed by a Superintendent of Police, helped in the ejection of the tenants. The Zemindar brought his elephants and pulled down the houses, which were razed to the ground and all the property trampled on. Over fifty houses were thus destroyed.

"We met one of the victimised families. Lapoi Devi, whose husband was in jail, told us that these elephants were brought out and three houses which belonged to her family, all in the same compound, were destroyed...Her father, Bijendranath Sharma, and her uncle Harimohan Sharma, were arrested, one for being a member of an unlawful assembly and the other for trespass, for building the house in which she now lived. "The Police," she said, "even now come into our houses and take away our utensils, grain, beddings and clothes. The Sub-divisional officer visits the house and abuses us from a distance."

"In Bengal, as in the North-West Frontier Province, police pillage has reached excesses comparable only to conditions under military occupation in times of war."

*Cases Cited In The Assembly.*

"Mr. S. C. Mitra cited[116a] in the Assembly cases,[116b] and produced documents and photographs in evidence. The details could not be published in the press owing to the Press Law. We quote some extracts :

"In the house of Mahendra Nath Jana, of Dalimba Chauk, Sutahata Police Station, all his movable properties were looted, and even the image of the goddess "Laxmi Devi" was thrown away from its place. The other is about the occurrence in the house of Jogendra Nath Kalsa, of Dundipur, on the 22nd September, 1932.

Here the District Magistrate, Mr. Burge, and the Sub-divisional Officer, Mr. Richardson, were also present when the police destroyed their granary and spoilt the paddy collected there.

"This is the photograph of that place (shown). Here is another case where, in the village of Bar-Basudebpur, in the house of Brojalal Maiti, the Bhagwat-Geeta was torn to pieces and put into the boiling handi, and the man was beaten. This is the statement, and this is the photograph, which will indicate how these things are done.... In the village of Hadia, they entered the house of Kartick and burnt the doors and windows. In the same village, in the house of Pran Krishna Das, they entered the temple and stole ornaments even from the body of the image of the family god. I particularly give these instances to show that in Eastern countries people are very sensitive when their religious sentiments are hurt in this way, so that the mighty Government at Simla also should know how the day-to-day administration is being carried on under the Ordinances that are now going to be made law......

"There are numbers of pictures taken. I am now showing the House a few only to prove that we do not draw these pictures from our mere imagination. Here is another case where, on the 24th September, 1932, in the house of Bihari Lal Maiti, for a tax of Rs. 24.9, 320 maunds of paddy were taken away in the absence of male members. Then this is another picture of a place where Swadeshi Khadi is sold, and they have destroyed all these things. Of course, they may have a special grudge against the Swadeshiwallahs. This is the photograph of the house of Ajit Kumar Maiti, of Dar-Bera, where the doors and windows have all been taken away, and property destroyed. Here is the photograph of a place of the house of Rakhal Chandra Samanta, of Hadi, where

the corrugated tin shed has been destroyed. Here is a picture of a house belonging to Gora Chand Kalsher, of Dundipur village, where the cottage has been destroyed and all the thatched roofs have been brought down.......

"Here is a photograph of a place where all the trees, banana trees, were cut, etc. How all these things are necessary for the realisation of a tax one can easily imagine. Here, on the 24th September, 1932, at about one o'clock, the second officer of the Thana, Dhirendra Nath Chatterjee went to the house of Sukumar Maiti for collecting the tax, but he destroyed his thatched house and his walls. This is another picture of a house of Keshab Chandra Mandal, of Dundipur, where all the ceilings have been destroyed. How the destruction of property or the ducking of a man in the tank helps the realisation of punitive tax has got to be explained. This is another picture of a stationery shop belonging to Nagendra Nath Das, where the entire property was destroyed. Now, this is the picture of a pharmacy where all the medicine bottles have been thrown out and destroyed."

*Intimidation And Humiliation.*

"The presence of troops in the villages of Bengal is one of the more glaring instances of msas intimidation. Sieges of villages by police and threats to women and those giving hospitality to Congressmen, collective fines, and action against the neighbours of persons arrested, are other forms.

*Some Cases.*

"At Kareli, villagers stated to us that those who gave shelter to non-co-operators were beaten. Villagers who took food and water to women non-co-operators were also maltreated. The police sealed the doors of the temple where the non-co-operators were staying. Villagers removed the doors. They were charged with theft. They were

acquitted after six months, but had been beaten severely. Some cases were treated in the Government hospital at Broach.

"Sama Shankar stated that on the 18th September he was stripped naked by the police. Bahji Bawa, aged 14, also stated that he was stripped of his clothes and beaten by Constable Mahomed Mustafa. Sub-Inspector Babu Bhai took out his knife and threatened to cut off his genital organs. Jetha Bhai, aged 19, made a similar statement, that P. C. Mahomed Mustafa stripped him naked. P. C. Mahomed Mustafa was present when Jetha Bhai made this statement, and we asked him if it was true. He said: "It was not I who stripped the boy naked; the Sub-Inspector did it." On second thoughts, he added: "Nobody stripped him naked. A search was made of everybody." We asked, "What kind of a search? for weapons? These people, with so few clothes, can be searched without taking off their clothes." Mustafa made no reply.

"Village of Gujera.—One hundred and fifty people were arrested at a Taluka conference on the 18th September. Forty were taken upstairs one by one and beaten. Six were severely injured, others were given blows on the face and body. Fifteen were stripped naked. Inspector Khambatta and Sub-Inspector Bapu Bhai were concerned in the beatings, but the former was not present when the stripping took place.

"Desai Pursotam, aged 35, cultivator of Kareli, stated that Sub-Inspector Bapu Bhai slapped him and kicked him with nailed boots till he fainted. He was taken the next day to Jambasur lock-up for two nights. He was then bleeding from the intestines. He was convicted for six months, and was in the jail hospital for three days.

*Women Insulted.*

"In Jahman Village (Punjab), women alleged attempts by the police to dishonour them. One lady said that

her door had been broken open many times, and if there was a prosecution of the police she would be willing to give evidence.

"Rami Nathabhai Kalidas, aged 65, stated that he was taken to the village office, and his shirt and cap removed by force. The police entered the house, took utensils and other movables, threatened his daughter-in-law who was ill in bed, with beating, and asked for her ornaments. The Mamlatdar (Magistrade) Manibhai Gandabhai took her out of the house, locked it up and took the keys away. His son was also brought to the village office. They were taken to the field after an hour. In the field they were stripped all of their clothes, and they were made to bend and touch their toes. Two police with sticks were on either side, and whenever they tried to stand up they were given blows by the Mamlatdar.

"Gangaben, the wife of the owner of the field, was then brought by the village police to see them in that condition. She was questioned about her husband and ordered to look at the naked men.

"The old man said he was kicked with nailed boots, at intervals, violently. ( Scars of nail marks were visible on his back.)

"Gangaben, the wife of Chaturbhai Bhajibhai, aged 26, who, it was alleged in the previous statement, was insulted and intimidated, was then examined by us. She confirmed the story and also said that the Mamlatdar used foul language."

*Looting By Punitive Police.*

"Houses have been entered and property smashed. We have already referred to some of these. In Madhkaul, a small village, we saw some of the results of the conduct of the punitive police. Granaries had been looted, women insulted, bayonets thrust into kitchen pots and vessels. In the village we saw a store which had been

wrecked. The kerosene oil in the store had been poured over the stores of rice and pulses. The villagers, through their sopkesman, told us a story of wrecking and looting.

"Complaints had sometimes been made to officials, but it was little use, as the police did what they liked and the regular officials had little control over them."

*Terrorisation.*

"From the statements and information in our possession we could give instance after instance of the terrorising activities of the police garrison, which is what the punitive police resembles. They levy blackmail, and rob women, visiting the area, of their jewels.

"At Sheohar, Sobhai, a Moslem, told us the story of his daughter, a married woman, who, while cutting corn in the field, was rushed at by the punitive police and violated.

"At Midnapore, we saw people who had received wounds at the hands of the punitive police. In Tamluk ( Bengal ) Pathans, Punjabis, and Gurkhas have been planted all over the district. The people had been beaten, robbed, fired on, and tortured, and made to pay for the very force that was responsible for these acts."

Lieut.-Colonel Arthur Osborn, D. S. O., in his book, *Must England Lose India ?*, quotes an official who told him : "I give you my word that after some of my punitive police have been stationed in a village for a few days, the spirit of the toughest of the political agitators is broken." Lieut.-Colonel Osborn inquired, "How ?" "Well, they will help themselves to everything. Within twenty-four hours there will not be a virgin or a four-anna piece left in that village."

The account of the reign of terror in 1932 may be fittingly concluded with this boast of an English official in India that within 24 hours after

the Punitive Police have been stationed in a village, not a virgin or a four-anna piece will be left in that village.[117]

The seventeenth century British tradition in Ireland served as an inspiration to British officials in India three hundred years later.

## F. THE END OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

Deshabandhu C. R. Das is reported to have frequently made the following observation about the virtues and failings of Gandhi's leadership : "The Mahatma opens a campaign in a brilliant fashion ; he works it up with unerring skill; he moves from success to success till he reaches the zenith of his campaign—but after that he loses his nerve and begins to falter."[118] The truth of this remark is well illustrated by the history of Gandhi's Campaigns both of 1921 and of 1930-33.

While the Civil Disobedience was going in full force in spite of the unabated fury of Government repression and the imprisonment of almost all notable leaders with nearly ninety thousand workers, Gandhi suddenly side-tracked the whole Campaign by raising a side-issue and staking his own life on a satisfactory solution of the same.

It will be remembered that in the Second Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi opposed with his whole might the creation of a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes and even rejected the proposal of Ambedkar to reserve a certain number of seats in the Legislatures for them on the basis of a common electorate for Hindus.[119] In course of one of his speeches in the Conference with reference to the proposal of separate electorate for the 'untouchables' he said : "If I was the only person to resist this thing, I will resist it with my life."[120] On March 11, 1932, Gandhi wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare in the same strain, and said that if the depressed

classes were granted separate electorate he would "fast unto death."[121] On August 17,[122] 1932, the Communal Award of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald was announced. According to this Award the Muhammadan, European and Sikh voters would elect candidates by voting in separate communal electorates, but provision would be made in the Constitution itself to empower a revision of this electoral arrangement after 10 years with the assent of the communities affected. The most important part of the Award, namely, that relating to the Depressed Classess, ran as follows :

"Members of the Depressed Classes qualified to vote will vote in a general constituency. In view of the fact that for a considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure adequate representation in the Legislature, a number of special seats will be assigned to them as shown in the table. These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the 'Depressed Classes' electorally qualified will be entitled to vote. Any person voting in such a special constituency will, as stated above, be also entitled to vote in a general constituency. It is intended that these constituencies should be formed in selected areas where the Depressed Classes are most numerous, and that, except in Madras, they should not cover the whole area of the Province ( as was the case with the Muhammadans, Europeans and the Sikhs)."[123] Mr. Macdonald, however, promised to accept any alternative scheme mutually agreed upon by the Hindus and the Depressed Classes.

On August 18 Gandhi addressed a letter to the Premier that he had resolved to commence fast unto death at noon on September 20, and it will cease if only the scheme is revised and a common electorate is restored.[124]

It is needless to say that alarm and anxiety spread over the whole of India at the news of Gandhi's pro-

posed fast unto death. Frantic appeals were made to him to desist from this grim resolve, but in vain. When the fast commenced on September 20, it naturally stirred the whole country to its depth and produced some commotion even in England, and an appeal was made over the signature of some influential persons, for a special prayer throughout the country. In India, September 20 was observed as a day of fasting and prayer. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya summoned a Conference which met, first in Bombay and then at Poona. Dr. Ambedkar, the most prominent leader of the Depressed Classes, was induced to join it, and he fully exploited the situation to his advantage. After a prolonged negotiation, and a great deal of bargaining, a settlement was arrived at on 25 September, i. e. the fifth day of the fast. A common electorate of all the Hindus was agreed upon, subject to two conditions. First, one hundred and forty-eight seats in the different Provincial legislatures were reserved for the Depressed Classes in place of seventy-one. Eighteen per cent. of the seats in the Central Legislature which were allotted to the general electorate for British India were similarly reserved for them. Secondly, there would be a primary election, by the voters of the Depressed Classes alone, of four candidates for each reserved seat, and the election by the General (Hindu) constituencies was restricted to these alone. The agreement, or the Poona Pact[125] as it came to be known, was ratified by the Hindu Mahasabha and accepted by the British Government, and the constitution amended accordingly. Thus the Depressed Classes benefitted both ways. They secured double the number of seats reserved for them in the Commmunal Award, and also enjoyed the benefits of a separate electorate, though in a modified form.

For the time being all these considerations were absent from the minds of men who were only concerned with

saving the life of Gandhi at any cost. This immediate object was achieved, and Gandhi broke his fast on 26 September. It was not long, however, before people wondered whether the 'epic fast' was worth either the issue involved or the decision arrived at.

But whatever one might think of the merits or the demerits of the Poona Agreement, there cannot be two opinions on the extreme unwisdom of Gandhi's action from the political point of view. Jawaharlal's reaction on this, like that on Gandhi's suspension of Non-co-Operation movement in 1922 and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931, may be taken as representing the views of those whose vision was not blinded by the mysterious influence of Gandhi :

"I felt annoyed with him (Gandhi) for choosing a side issue for his final sacrifice. What would be the result on our freedom movement ? Would not the larger issues fade into the background, for the time being at least ? And, if he attained his immediate object and got a joint electorate for the depressed classes, would not that result in a reaction and a feeling that something had been achieved and nothing more need be done for a while ? And was not his action a recognition, and in part an acceptance, of the communal award and the general scheme of things as sponsored by the Government ? Was this consistent with non-co-operation and civil disobedience ? Afrer so much sacrifice and brave endeavour, was our movement to tail off into something insignificant ?

"I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set !"[126]

These and similar thoughts were uppermost in the minds of a large section of people after the immediate crisis was over. There can be no doubt that the effect of

Gandhi's action upon the Civil Disobedience movement was disastrous. It diverted all attention from the actual fight, at least for the time being, when it was at its height. But far more disastrous was the fact that henceforth Gandhi devoted his whole energy and attention to the question of untouchability and seemed to have lost interest in the political issue. When questions were put to him whether political or social work should be done, he gave replies that were vague and not to the point. Gradually the idea dawned upon the minds of all that Gandhi's heart was no longer in the Civil Disobedience campaign.

In spite of such feelings the fight was kept on. The Independence Day on January 26, 1933, was celebrated with great enthusiasm all over India. Demonstrations were broken by force, large numbers were arrested, and at Badangunj in Hooghly District (Bengal) the police resorted to shooting for dispersing the Congress procession. Mrs. Gandhi was arrested while leading a procession of women at Borsad (Gujarat), and sentenced to six months' imprisonment on February 7, 1933. But the most outstanding event was the Calcutta session of the Congress, held on March 31, 1933. The enthusiasm and spirit of resistance manifested on the occasion was by no means less than that displayed at Delhi, in April, 1932. More than two thousand delegates were elected from different parts of the country of whom about a thousand were arrested before their start or during the journey. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was elected President and the old widowed mother of Jawaharlal Nehru decided to attend. But these two, along with a number of other leaders, were arrested on their way.

In spite of the ban more than a thousand delegates met at the place selected for the session. The police soon arrived at the scene and began to strike the Congressmen with *lathis*. But even while the heavy *lathi* blows were breaking their heads, the delegates who were in the centre of the

circle held the session under the Presidentship of Mrs. J. M. Sen Gupta. Resolutions were passed reaffirming (1) the goal of independence, (2) Civil Disobedience, and (3) boycott of foreign cloth and British goods. About 250 persons, including 40 ladies, were arrested, but most of them were released. Mrs. Sen Gupta was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Malaviya, after his release, went to Calcutta and collected authentic information about the brutal assault of the Congress delegates by the Police. He challenged the Government to hold an inquiry, but the challenge was not taken up.

The following extract from the speech of the President-elect, the venerable Pandit Malaviya, reflects the feeling of the country at the time :

"It is estimated that nearly 120,000 persons, including several thousand women and quite a number of children, have been arrested and imprisoned during the last fifteen months. It is an open secret that when the Government started repression, the official expectation was that they would crush the Congress in six weeks' time. Fifteen months have not enabled the Government to achieve the object. Twice fifteen months will not enable it to do so."[127]

On this Subhas Bose comments :

"This was not the review made by a young hot-head but by one of the oldest and most moderate leaders of the Congress. Consequently, the response made by the country to the Congress appeal in 1932 and 1933,—in spite of lack of preparation, in spite of the sudden arrest of the organisers and financiers of the Party early in January, 1932, and in spite of the diversion caused by the Mahatma's fast in September 1932 and the anti-untouchability campaign thereafter—can by no means be regarded as unsatisfactory."[128]

But while the Congressmen continued their fight with grim determination and held aloft the banner of their freedom, Gandhi had no heart in the Civil Disobedience

movement and his mind was fully occupied by the anti-untouchability campaign.

While the heroic fight and sacrifice of the Congressmen in Calcutta were still fresh in public memory Gandhi threw a bombshell in the shape of an announcement on May 8, 1933, that he would begin a fast of 21 days for purification of himself and his associates for "greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection with the Harijan cause." The Government issued a communique that they had decided to release Gandhi in view of the nature of the object of his fast and the attitude of mind which it disclosed. Immediately after his release, on May 8, Gandhi issued a long statement recommeding to the President of the Congress to suspend Civil Disobedience Campaign for one full month or even six weeks. The reasons given for this momentous step were the following:

1. "The whole purpose of the fast will be frustrated if I allowed my brain to be occupied by any extraneous matter, that is any matter outside the Harijan work.

2. The secrecy that has attended the movement is fatal to its success.

3. Fear has seized the common mass. The Ordinances have cowed them down, and I am inclined to think that the secret methods are largely responsible for the demoralisation, The movement of Civil Disobedience does not depend so much on the quantity as on the quality of men and women taking part in it.

4. During these three weeks (of fast) all Civil resisters will be in a state of terrible suspense.[129]

These arguments, on the face of it, are hardly convincing, to say the least of it. The first argument is entirely out of place, as the Civil Disobedience movement did not depend upon Gandhi so long as he was in prison and was actually being carried on without him. The next argument must appear to be most curious to any rational

mind.[130] The third is really an admission of failure couched in a verbiage which does little credit either to the heart or head of a great leader. Besides, it was a matter of opinion, and not easily reconcileable to the facts stated above in connection with the progress of the movement in 1933. As regards the fourth or the last argument, it is sufficient to point out that if the Civil Disobedience movement had survived Gandhi's 'epic fast' unto death, it could easily be kept alive during the fast of three weeks. On the whole, an ordinary man cannot but regard the statement as an effusion of a mystic and a saint. In the same statement Gandhi made an appeal to the Government of India to withdraw the Ordinances and release the Civil Disobedience prisoners. Unfortunately, Lord Willingdon was neither a mystic nor a saint, but a die-hard politician, and therefore he not only paid no heed to the appeal, but gave Gandhi a strong rebuff.

An official *communique*, dated May 9, clearly explained the position of the Government of India. A mere temporary suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement would not suffice, but the Government must be fully satisfied that the movement was definitely abandoned, befo e they could release the prisoners. The Government were determined not to let out the prisoners, as their release might lead to the renewal of the Movement. But the sting was in the tail. The *communique* concluded as follows : "There is no intention of negotiating with the Congress for a withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement or of releasing prisoners with a view to arrive at any settlement with them in regard to these unlawful activities."[131] In other words, Willingdon reminded Gandhi that the days of Irwin were over, and there would be no further agreement between him (Gandhi) and the Viceroy. It is an indication of the Government's view as to the extent of humiliation and disgrace which Irwin had brought

upon it by concluding an agreement with Gandhi.

The Acting President of the Congress, Aney, in obedience to Gandhi's request, suspended Civil Disobedience, at first for six weeks and then for a further period of six weeks. As soon as Gandhi had sufficiently recovered from the effects of the fast an informal Conference of Congressmen was held at Poona on July 12, 1933, to review the political situation and determine the future plans. The official history of the Congress does not give either the names of those who participated in the Conference or the trend of discussion at the meeting. It merely says that there was a general discussion on the first day; next day Gandhi made an exhaustive statement "dealing with the points raised by the members of the Conference and placing before them his suggestions." It is evident, however, that there was sharp difference of opinion, for we are told that the Conference "rejected a motion for the unconditional withdrawal of Civil Disobedience but also threw out a motion favouring Individual Civil Disobedience." In the end it was decided that Gandhi should "seek an interview with the Viceroy for arriving at a settlement with the Government."[132] It passes one's comprehension how such a proposal could be entertained in the face of the Government *communique*, of May 9, quoted above, definitely closing doors against any such negotiation. The Viceroy, as could be expected, declined to interview Gandhi, (17 July), and the Congress had to thank itself alone for this humiliating rebuff. This, we are told in the official history of the Congress, "forced the Nation, if it was to conserve national honour, to continue the struggle."[133] One would be naturally tempted to say that the national honour would have been maintained far better if the struggle were continued without eating the humble pie. Then, again, it must be regarded as a very poor service to the 'national honour' if we think

of the way in which it was decided to continue the struggle. Mass Civil Disobedience was suspended and only those "who were able and willing were advised to offer Individual Civil Disobedience". As if this was not enough, "under the orders of the Acting President, all Congress Organisations and war councils ceased to function in view of the suspension of mass Satyagraha."[134]

It is difficult to say how or why the idea of Individual Civil Disobedience was revived after it was rejected by the Poona Conference of 12 July. A member of the Congress Working Committee, Mr. F. K. Nariman, maintained that it was merely a protest against the Viceroy's declining to interview Gandhi. He made a caustic comment on the whole procedure and ideology of Gandhi. "Interview or Death", said he, "is the national slogan for the present ......This renewed fight in August last is not for Swaraj, nor even for political constitutional advance, but for the assertion of a supposed 'national right' of an unconditional interview." On the resolution about Individual Civil Disobedience, he commented: "Does it need an Indian National Congress to tell an individual to break laws on his own responsibility and take the consequences?" Criticising the decision to dissolve or suspend all Congress organizations he maintained that 'none can dissolve the National Assemblies that have come into existence by popular vote.'[135] Mr. Nariman's scathing criticism of the whole ideology and procedure of Gandhi leading to the suspension of Civil Disobedience movement deserves special notice. For, irrespective of the question whether and how far his views were right, they show that independent rational thinking was not altogether dead in Indian politics, and there were at least some leaders, even inside the Congress Circle, who successfully resisted what may be regarded as mass hypnotism exercised by Gandhi.[136]

The history of Individual Civil Disobedience move-

ment may be briefly told. Gandhi "inaugurated the campaign" by disbanding the Sabarmati Ashram which he had founded 18 years before. He vacated the Ashram and disposed of its property, and thereby "divested himself of any little germs of attachment to things mundane, which might possibly take root in his breast."[136a] Whatever we might think of this explanation by a devotee, there was an unmistakable Gandhian touch in the offer of the land, building and crops to Government, which was, of course, not accepted. But there was a solemn aspect, too. It naturally recalled to men's minds the statement that Gandhi had made on the eve of his march to Dandi that he would never return to the Ashram until Swaraj was won.

Gandhi decided to open the campaign on August 1, 1933, by commencing his march to the village of Ras, but was arrested during the previous night with 34 other inmates of the Ashram and alll were sent to prison. Gandhi was released on August 4, and served with an order to reside in Poona. Gandhi, having disobeyed the order, was arrested again on the same day and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. Gandhi's example was followed by hundreds of others all over the country. An important decision taken at this time must be noticed. When the Civil Disobedience campaign was resumed in January, 1932, Vallabhbhai Patel, the then President of the Congress, drew up a list of persons who were to succeed him as Acting President, one after another, as each was put in prison or otherwise unable to act. Aney was the President when Civil Disobedience was suspended in May, 1933, but he offered Individual Civil Disobedience and was arrested on August 14. His successor, Sardul Singh Cavesheer, followed his example, but before doing so he issued orders terminating the office of the Acting President. Thus the last vestige of Congress organisation was voluntarily destroyed, "with a view to

facilitate the campaign becoming truly one of Individual Civil Disobedience."[137]

As Gandhi was refused facilities in prison for conducting the Anti-Untouchability Campaign, he resorted to a fast on August 16, a step incomprehensible to even Nehru.[138] As Gandhi's condition became very critical he was released unconditionally on August 23, 1933. Gandhi, however, regarded himself as not free to resume Civil Disobedience till the full term of his imprisonment was over, and devoted the period to the furtherance of the Harijan movement.

By that time the Individual Civil Disobedience "was dead like a door-nail." Referring to the commencement of the New Year, 1934, the official history of the Congress records: "The progress of events in the line of Civil Disobedience was none too satisfactory. The prisoners who were released were fagged. The provincial leaders who had promised at Poona Conference to lead their Provinces if Mass Civil Disobedience were given up and Individual Civil Disobedience continued, did not carry out their pledges, except in a few cases. Those who were released from jails found themselves unable or unwilling to face another conviction."[138a] Slowly and silently the movement faded away, and during the upheaval caused by the great earthquake at Bihar on January 16, 1934, it passed away unnoticed into the limbo of oblivion.

Thus ended the Civil Disobedience movement, the third and the last to be led by Gandhi in person. Whether the Anti-Untouchability Campaign which he substituted for it was nobler or more useful to the country and calculated to bring it nearer to the avowed goal of independence within a shorter period, we need not pause to discuss here, but leave everyone to form his own judgment.

The only material issue that faced the Indian public on May 9, 1933, was that the great Civil Disobedience

movement came to an ignoble end, in spite of all the brave and noble words uttered by Gandhi on the eve of his famous march to Dandi. "Civil Disobedience," said he, "once begun this time, cannot be stopped and must not be stopped so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive."[139] The most puzzling thing to an Indian was the leader's order to lay down arms and retreat even before the issue of victory or defeat was clearly decided.

The sudden suspension of Mass Civil Disobedience campaign on May 8, 1933, without any rhyme and reason undoubtedly came as a stunning blow to many. But Gandhi's action did not evoke much open criticism at the time, because the whole of India was preoccupied with the question of his health. Only Vithalbhai Patel and Subhas Bose, who were in Vienna and thus at too great a distance to be affected by the passing scenes of the moment, iasued a manifesto condemning Gandhi's decision to suspend the Civil Disobedience movement and stating that it virtually undid the work and the sacrifice of the last thirteen years. According to the manifesto, it signified the failure of the Civil Disobedience campaign, as also of Gandhi's leadership, and the country required a more radical policy and leadership. Not much attention was drawn to it, for "even friends thought that it was an outrageous act to criticise the Mahatma when his life was in jeopardy because of the fast."[140]

Mr. F. K. Nariman, the Bombay leader, soon after his release made a bitter attack on the ideology and conduct of the Campaign by Gandhi. He also suggested that the "remedy lay in securing for Gandhi, in place of the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, another political task-master,—a plain-speaking outspoken giant and not lip-sealed mummies who always shake their heads like spring dolls, perpendiculary or horizontally, according as the Mahatma pulls the

strings straight or sideways."[141] But barring a few exceptions like these, the Congressmen, as a whole, openly or tacitly approved of Gandhi's policy and continued to follow his lead.

Judging at this distance of time, in a detached spirit, the whole conduct of Gandhi appears to be a mystery and seems absolutely unjustifiable on the part of an ordinary man who does not "see things in a flash and acts upon impulse' ( as is claimed for Gandhi by his devotees ),[142] but thinks and acts in the light of intellect and reason. It is inconceivable why, in course of a *fight to a finish* for independence, and after a definite rejection of the claim of R. T. C. or British Government to frame a constitution for India, the Congress or its leader should take notice of any particular item of the constitution as proposed to be framed by the British Government. The Congress or Gandhi could not accept the proposed constitution without stultifying themselves and rendering meaningless the launching of the Civil Disobedience campaign in 1930, or its resumption in 1932. Even the Congress held in Calcutta in March, 1933, reiterated the position that no constitution framed by the British Government "can be worthy of consideration by, or acceptable to, the people of India."[143] What was then the meaning of all this fuss about a particular provision of the constitution which the Congress was pledged to reject in toto ?

But it was something worse than a fuss. By staking his life on the Communal Award Gandhi gave away the whole moral justification of the Civil Disobedience campaign. What was still more deplorable, he sounded the death-knell of the fight for independence for which hundreds of thousands had undergone untold miseries and sufferings. All this was done for the sake of an issue which, whatever its value or necessity, certainly must yield in importance to freedom, and whose only satisfactory solution

depended upon it. It has been urged that he took a vow to resist the dismemberment of the Hindus with his life, and the 'fast unto death' was therefore obligatory upon him. But it may be argued, in the first place, that to one who was equally resolved not to accept, as binding, any constitution framed by R. T. C. or the Government, Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Award should not have been interpreted as a dismemberment of the Hindus. Secondly, the only just and honourable way in which he should have fought it with his life, was to continue the grim struggle which he had begun till his death.

If the first fast was indefensible, the second one, leading to the suspension of Civil Disobedience campaign was not only a blunder of the first magnitude but a great tragedy. After plunging the whole country in a terrible welter of chaos and sufferings, the leader of the Campaign suddenly cries halt and surrenders, simply because his mind was bent npon another campaign of an altogether different kind. One may well wonder whether even a 'saint' has the right to play drakes and ducks with the lives and fortunes of his countrymen in such an irresponsible manner. The only justification that Gandhi or his blind devotees ever vouchsafed for his strange conduct leading to all the terrible consequences, is contained in the two statements which he issued on September 15 and 20, 1932.[144] The fast, we are told, "is intended to sting Hindu conscience into right religious condition." Referring to the great value of fast as a means of purification he says: "Having made a serious attempt to attain self-purification, I have developed some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly 'the still small voice within.' My present penance I have undertaken in obedience to this voice."[145] All these are, of course, above the heads of those who are neither mystics nor saints, and a historian, at least, should not belong to the one or to the other category.

Nor should he accept the view, even though advanced by a man of the stature of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, that Gandhi "was a unique personality, and it was impossible to judge him by the usual standards or even to apply the ordinary canons of logic to him",[146] if the implication is, as it seems to be, that it would be unjust or improper to judge Gandhi in this manner.

An individual, in his private capacity, is certainly within his rights to place implicit faith in a person, accept his opinion and judgment without question, and regard him as an infallible saint or divinity. But such rights or privileges should not be exercised by anyone while openly passing judgment on that person in his public capacity, particularly when he plays an important role in the public affairs of the country. It would be a dereliction of duty on the part of a historian. dealing with Gandhi, the political leader, if he fails to judge him by the same standard as should be normally applied to all persons of that category. It has been very painful to the author to pass adverse comments on a man of Gandhi's stature, but he derives comfort from the thought that in doing so he has paid the highest tribute of respect to Mahatma Gandhi by trying to uphold the great ideal of TRUTH which was the most characteristic feature of his life. The author humbly claims that in delineating the life and character of Gandhi he has been inspired solely by a respect for truth, logic and justice.